JUDGMENT AND DOMINION

JUDGMENT AND DOMINION

AN ECONOMIC COMMENTARY ON I CORINTHIANS

GARY NORTH

POINT FIVE PRESS
Dallas, Georgia

Judgment and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on I Corinthians

Copyright © 2012, 2021 by Gary North

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

Published by
Point Five Press
P.O. Box 2778
Dallas, Georgia 30132

Typesetting by Kyle Shepherd

This book is dedicated to

Kenneth L. Gentry

whose books on eschatology have
established the terms of discourse

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface . . . . . *ix*

Introduction 1
1 Two Kinds of Foolishness (I Cor. 1:18–25) 11
2 Two Kind of Minds (I Cor. 2:14–16) 31
3 Final Judgment and Kingdom Continuity (I Cor. 3:10–15) . . . 41
4 Definitive Delegated Ownership (I Cor. 3:19–23) 52
5 Progressive Knowledge, Progressive Responsibility (I Cor. 4:1–5) 62
6 Eschatology and Biblical Theocracy (I Cor. 6:2–9) 71
7 Discipline and the Church's Inheritance (I Cor. 6:9–11) . . . 77
8 Calling and Occupation (I Cor. 7:20–24) 83
9 A Confirmed Bachelor's Bias (I Cor. 7:25–31) 102
10 Meat Offered to Idols (I Cor. 8:4) 113
11 Retaining the Fruits of Our Labor (I Cor. 9:7–10) 122
12 Running the Race (I Cor. 9:24–27) 131
13 The Politics of Plunder (I Cor. 10:24) 135
14 Full-Time Christian Service (I Cor. 10:31) 143
15 Hierarchy: Family, Market, and State (I Cor. 11:1–3) 158
16 The Division of Labor (I Cor. 12:4–7) 178
17 Eschatology and Capital Accumulation (I Cor. 15:21–28) . . . 193
18 Systematic Charity (I Cor. 16:1–3) 212

Conclusion 221

APPENDIX A—A Critique of Heretical Preterism 239
APPENDIX B—Legalism vs. Alcohol 279

PREFACE

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

MATTHEW 10:28

A. Final Judgment

Modern man does not tolerate the suggestion that God will bring final judgment at the end of time, condemning His enemies to eternal torment. This doctrine is Christianity's greatest offense. It always has been. Paul's sermon to the Athenians on Mars' Hill alienated most of his listeners.

> Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them (Acts 17:29–33).

Every age so far has been at war with God. In the early church, men who agreed on the final judgment disagreed on the doctrine of the incarnation. These questions dominated their discussions: Is God monotheistic, polytheistic, or Trinitarian? Is Jesus Christ the incarnate God? Is He both man and God? The rejection of Christ's uniquely divine status was the heart of apostasy in both Jerusalem and Rome.

The doctrine of God is still a divisive issue, but most covenant-breakers today choose to shrug off the existence of the Trinity

as one more unanswerable question that is neither here nor there in the larger picture. But they do not regard the final judgment in this way. They reject it, but they do not regard it as irrelevant. God has put a sense of foreboding in every human heart. He has also imposed death. Men can pretend that they do not see God's hand in life, but they cannot avoid death.

Sometimes the dividing issue is judicial hierarchy. Men ask: Who possesses lawful authority, i.e., the God-delegated right, to "lay down the law"? Sometimes the dividing issue is the law itself: its authoritative source and ethical content. At other times, the dividing issue is the nature of the judicial sanctions that are imposed by the civil magistrate. *But, in every era, the dividing issue is God's final judgment*. This is what leads to the question: Who has the right to enforce the law? The correct answer: the person who represents God. The definitive representative of God in history is Jesus Christ, as Paul told the Athenians, and as Christ told the Jewish leaders.

> And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house (Matt. 9:2–7).

The judicial issue of rendering judgment is both eternal and historical. Jesus Christ is God's representative of final judgment: God "will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" (Acts 17:31). As the final judge, Christ delegates representatives in civil government (Rom. 13:1–7).[1] Civil magistrates must execute judgment in God's name or in the name of some other sovereign authority. Let us consider an example from history. After the English took control in India, they banned the Hindu practice of *suttee* ("faithful wife"): burning alive a widow on her husband's funeral pyre. This practice was supposedly voluntary on the part of widows, but social pressure was placed on widows to conform, including ostracism. The 1829 ban was a direct interference with a long-standing religious practice. References to the practice exist as early as 316

1. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 9.

B.C. The suppression of suttee was Victorian English Christianity's coercive suppression of a Hindu religious tradition. It was a political act against a religious practice.[2] The English imposed negative civil sanctions against those who imposed a permanent negative sanction on widows. One or the other deeply committed religious group was determined to impose its negative sanctions in the name of its divinity. There was no neutral religious position between the two groups on this issue. This was a legal and moral question: "Which group had the right before God to impose its negative sanctions?" Modern humanists in the West prefer not to think about religious questions such as this one. They avoid such questions whenever possible. This does not make these questions go away. They remain at the heart of the civil order. The source of every society's law-order is the god of that society.

B. Final Judgment vs. Relativism

The doctrine of God's final judgment testifies against all forms of relativism. This is why secular liberalism rejects this Christian doctrine. So does secular conservatism. The doctrine of God's final judgment announces that certain ideas are eternally true; therefore, other ideas are eternally false. God will impose eternal, irreversible negative sanctions on those people who believe certain theologically incorrect doctrines, such as the denial of the following truths. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The doctrine of final judgment offers covenant-breaking men no wiggle room. There are no loopholes. There will be no plea bargaining on judgment day.

God's final judgment is the foundation of men's temporal judgments. *The ability of men to make accurate judgments in history exists only because men are made in God's image*. Men can render preliminary judgments because God will render final judgment. If God will not render final judgment, then all human judgments are without either a moral or an aesthetic foundation. Everything that men do would then be swallowed up in cosmic relativism and impersonalism.

There are three scientific views of cosmic history, apart from the

2. "Lord William Bentinck on the Suppression of *Sati*, 8 November 1829," *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy, 1750–1921*, ed. Arthur B. Keith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), I, pp. 208–26.

doctrine of creation and final judgment. First is the heat death of the universe. This is the most widely held cosmological position today. The world is said to be running down. If it is, then it must end in the meaningless, impersonal triumph of absolute zero over all life and over every natural process that supposedly can lead to life in the cosmos.[3] Second in popularity is the idea of cyclical history. Everything repeats itself. The cosmic scientific version of this ancient doctrine is the eternal expansion and contraction of the universe.[4] Third is the doctrine of continual creation and destruction. Hydrogen atoms appear out of nothing, and matter disappears into nothing. (This steady-state theory of the universe is not widely held among scientists, having been made difficult by the failure of the orbital satellites to detect the radiation which the theory mandates.)[5] All three views are cosmically impersonal. There is no God to impute meaning to history and nature.

The idea of imputation is the idea of judgment. *To impute is to render judgment*. Men assess the historical meaning, purpose, or role of this or that event. How can they do this on their own authority? What meaning, purpose, or role does anyone's judgment possess? After he dies, what meaning, purpose, or role will his lifetime of rendering judgment possess in retrospect? Which of his temporal successors will determine this authoritatively? How will any successor enforce his retroactive judgments? He is mortal, too. He will die. The final human judge in the process will have the last say. But if he, too, is at last swallowed up by the meaningless, purposeless, impersonal natural force of death, then no one has the last say. Everything turns out to be purposeless in retrospect when there is no agent capable of rendering retrospective judgment.

Modern man prefers to declare an official doctrine of relativism. He declares this doctrine authoritatively. "Everything changes. Nothing is permanent." This is a revised version of Heraclitus' doctrine that, in history, everything flows. "Change is the essence of reality." But this means a world without final meaning, a world without fixed judgments. This means the triumph of relativism. Modern pagan man, imitating ancient pagan man, prefers relativism to the doctrine

3. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), ch. 2.

4. Stanley Jaki, *Science and Creation: From eternal cycles to an oscillating universe* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, [1974] 1980).

5. Stanley Jaki, *The Road of Science and the Ways to God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 269–71.

of God's final judgment. Relativism is covenant-breaking man's preliminary declaration of final judgment on himself: "Not guilty."

C. Christian Relativism

1. Inescapable Judgment

The presentation of the gospel—the *good news **of** Jesus Christ*—necessarily involves the doctrine of *final judgment **by** Jesus Christ*: the fearful news. The positive sanctions of God's salvation of some people have meaning only in the context of the negative sanctions of God's damnation of all the other people. Christians therefore must render preliminary judgment on those who reject the doctrine of Christ's substitutionary atonement. They tell the listener, "no decision is still a decision: a decision against." They are correct. *Judgment is an inescapable concept*. By ignoring Jesus Christ, men render judgment against Him. No decision is still a decision. Original sin begins with a decision against Christ. Christians assume this when they announce Christ's legal claims on their listeners.

At the same time, Christians resent judgments placed on them by other Christians. They accuse their Christian critics of being judgmental, of being Pharisees. They say that they stand with Jesus against Pharisaism. They do not ask themselves this crucial question: "On what legal basis did Jesus accuse the Pharisees, other than His authoritative view of God, man, law, sanctions, and time?" *Judgment is an inescapable concept*.

2. Accurate Judgment

The dividing issue here is not the presence of judgment. Judgment is inescapable. There is no neutrality in life. The issue here is the accuracy of the judgment rendered: the judge's lawful authority to render judgment, the authority of his standards, and the accuracy of his application of these standards to specific events or ideas. But naive Christians prefer to cite Matthew 7:1. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." They do not understand that Jesus gave this warning in His sermon on the mount, in which He issued positive and negative verbal sanctions. They do not understand that Jesus was calling on His disciples to *render judgment biblically* as their affirmation of their *right to be judged biblically*.

> Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to

> you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye (Matt. 7:1–5).

His point was not the moral necessity of avoiding the task of rendering judgment against slivers in other people's eyes. His point was that critics must render accurate judgment first against beams in their own eyes, as the preliminary step in rendering judgment on other men's visual condition. But many Christians are blind on this point. They freely render judgments on the judicial status of non-Christians, but then they relegate both morals and doctrine to peripheral status within the church. This is a schizophrenic position, yet it is widespread.

Every Christian wants to stay within his moral, theological, and aesthetic comfort zone, rendering judgments against the antinomians on his left, who reject his authority, and the legalists on his right, whose authority he rejects. But this epistemological question is inescapable: *By what standard*? Roman Catholics cast out the Eastern Orthodox Church in 1054. The East responded in kind. There were mutual anathemas all around. Then Protestants left Roman Catholicism in the sixteenth century. More mutual anathemas all around.

3. Rhetoric of the Protestant Reformation

The Protestant Reformation was secured by controversy and bloodshed. Religious wars went on for over a century in Europe, culminating on the continent in the Thirty Years War between Catholics and Protestants (1618–48) and in England with a civil war between Protestants (1642–60). Yet there are millions of Protestants today who decry mere confrontational rhetoric. They seem completely unaware of Luther's repeated use of ridicule and sarcasm in mobilizing his Protestant forces.[6] They are also unaware of John Calvin's use of invective in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This includes the vast majority of those few people who identify themselves as Calvinists. They have not read what Calvin wrote.

---

6. Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Luther and the False Brethren* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 52, 70, 89, 103, 197–98, 200–202, 205; Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics, 1531–1546* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 189–99.

Roman Catholics: "raving madmen" who "prate"[7]

Bullingerites: "squeamish men"[8]

Osiander (Lutheran): "perversely ingenious,"[9] "ignorantly babbling"[10] "absurd" "rubbish,"[11] a "Sophist"[12] writing "bombast,"[13] "mad error,"[14] and "deceits"[15]

Arminians: "dogs" who "vomit forth these blasphemies" and "rave,"[16] "impious and profane men"[17]

Anabaptists: "madmen" who preach "pestilential error"[18]

Scholastic theologians: "babble childishly" and "chatter,"[19] "mad school of wranglers,"[20] "blockheads"[21]

Calvin described Jews as "sharp-nosed fault-finders" and "dogs."[22] He treated Epicureans, Socinians, Servetus, and other non-Christian opponents in the same way. No major Christian publishing company would issue either Luther's or Calvin's writings if they were alive today unless their books were heavily edited to remove such language. John Knox was, if anything, more intemperate. It is only because their books are regarded as classics and therefore beyond any editor's blue pencil that their invective remains in print. Commentators "within the camp of the faithful" generally pass over these rhetorical flourishes whenever they think they can get away with silence. Protestants in the pews remain unaware of the rhetoric of the Protestant Reformation. They may have come to grips emotionally with the fact that Protestant and Catholic armies waged war on each other for over a century, but they would be amazed to learn that Christian authors

7. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), Library of Christian Classics, vol. XX, Book I, Chapter XI, Section 3.
8. *Ibid*., I:XIII:3.
9. *Ibid*., I:XV:3.
10. *Ibid*., II:XII:6.
11. *Ibid*., II:XII:7.
12. *Ibid*., III:XI:7.
13. *Ibid*., III:XI:8.
14. *Ibid*., III:XI:10.
15. *Idem*.
16. *Ibid*., I:XVII:2.
17. *Ibid*., I:XVIII:3.
18. *Ibid*., II:X:1.
19. *Ibid*., III:II:8.
20. *Ibid*., III:II:43.
21. *Ibid*., III:XX:25.
22. *Ibid*., I:VIII:11.

used offensive rhetoric against each other. Modern Protestants are almost terminally naive.

There can be inappropriate rhetoric, but when the great dual issue of eternal life and death is at stake, divisiveness is inescapable. Judgments must be made. The questions are these: (1) Who possesses the lawful delegated authority to render these judgments representatively in God's name in history? (2) Whose historical judgments will God uphold at the final judgment?

D. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians

This epistle deals with the importance of rendering judgment: inside the church and against the world. Paul pressures the church to take action against a person who had committed incest (chapter 5). He also tells them to avoid going into secular civil courts in order to settle disputes with other Christians (chapter 6). In neither case does he say that they should avoid rendering judgments.

This epistle is based on the necessity of rendering judgments in life, beginning with self-judgment. Why is this necessary? Because of God's final judgment. "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (I Cor. 3:13–15).[23]

Ray Sutton used to say that the best way for a newly arrived pastor to split the congregation is to begin his ministry to the church with a series of sermons on First Corinthians. I have no doubt that Sutton's assessment is correct. He recommended beginning with one of the gospels. This is wise, if the pastor's goal is to avoid splitting the congregation. I am not persuaded that this is always the correct goal. Some congregations need to be split early by the divisive power of the Bible's message of judgment. The unity that Paul proclaims in chapter 12 could be secured only by their imposing excommunication in chapter 5.

Sutton also recommended weekly communion, yet he said that the Lord's Supper is divisive: an ecclesiastical means of imposing God's sanctions. The sanctions that God brings through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper cannot be avoided. Paul in chapter 11 warns against

23. Chapter 3.

taking the Lord's Supper while harboring sin. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (11:28–31). God's sanctions are real. Self-judgment is important as a way to avoid them.

The church is cleansed of sin and sinners by inescapably judgmental preaching, inescapably judgmental communion, and predictable formal discipline. These are the three marks of a faithful church. Without godly judgment, there is no church. There is only a weekly get-together.

Conclusion

The task of rendering judgment is inescapable. It is basic to the dominion covenant. This involves making economic judgments. In a world of God-cursed scarcity (Gen. 3:17–19),[24] we must choose among scarce resources. We do so on the basis of our imputation: how much value we ascribe to one resource vs. another, in terms of which scale of values. We do this also in terms of objective market prices. Subjective imputation by competing and cooperating market participants is what establishes an objective array of prices.

The nagging and continual theoretical question of the relationship between men's subjective values and the market's objective prices can be solved only by an appeal to God as the sovereign imputing agent. He will render final judgment at the end of time, thereby establishing retroactively how close individuals and corporate entities came to His standards. Case by case, life by life, God will provide an answer to this rhetorical question: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).[25]

24. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), chaps. 3, 4.

25. Gary North, *Trust and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Mark* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 11.

INTRODUCTION

Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; And charged them that they should not make him known: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

MATTHEW 12:14–21

A. Judgments by Jesus

Jesus Christ rendered Spirit-filled judgments in history: on Jews and on gentiles. Yet He seldom spoke to gentiles. He brought positive sanctions to a handful of them: the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), the Roman centurion whose servant He healed from a distance (Matt. 8:5–13), and the woman of Canaan whose daughter He healed from a distance (Matt. 15:22–28). The testimony of the Samaritan woman to her fellow townspeople led to their conversion to saving faith. One of them told her, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42). Jesus commented on the confidence in Jesus that the centurion had publicly announced, contrasting his faith with the faith of the Jews. "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said

unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour" (Matt. 8:11–13). Jesus said to the woman, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (Matt. 15:28). Jesus used the faith in Him shown by these gentiles as a means of condemning the Jews.

Jesus accurately assessed the Old Covenant order, and then He judged it negatively in full public view during His earthly ministry. He judged it by speaking against its leaders and also by healing their followers. He brought positive sanctions into the lives of common people. This action affirmed both His authority as a judge and His ability to bring negative sanctions into their lives. He healed bodies in order to prove that He could heal souls. He delivered some people from physical bondage to prove that He could deliver all people from spiritual bondage.

> And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men (Matt. 9:2–8).

Jesus granted these positive sanctions in order to condemn Old Covenant Israel. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you" (Luke 10:13–14). This was an Old Covenant strategy: *condemnation through charity*. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee" (Prov. 25:21–22). Paul recommended this strategy. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his

head" (Rom. 12:19–20).[1] By granting favors to covenant-breakers that they do not deserve, the covenant-keeper invokes God's curse on them, should they fail to repent. He judges them in history as a lawful agent of God's judgment for eternity. So Jesus did to the Jews. This is judgment unto victory.

At the cross, the Jews and the Romans jointly judged Jesus. Three days later, His bodily resurrection demonstrated that He, not they, possessed the God-given authority to judge. At His ascension, He was visibly raised above the earth (Acts 1:9), thereby demonstrating the truth of His post-resurrection words to His disciples: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18b).[2] In A.D. 70, Jesus brought final judgment against Old Covenant Israel. Jerusalem was captured by the Roman army, and the temple was burned. His verbal judgment against Old Covenant Israel during His earthly ministry was confirmed in A.D. 70.[3]

Jesus was a servant during His earthly ministry, just as Isaiah had prophesied. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:11). He repeatedly rendered judgment against sickness by healing the sick. He verbally condemned the Jews' religious leaders. They fought back, but lost. The gospel spread. Jesus successfully brought visible judgment against the Jews and their institutions in A.D. 70. Whose judgment was judgment unto failure? Christ's or the Old Covenant order's? His church has replaced Old Covenant Israel, just as He told the Pharisees that it would. "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). His church has replaced Rome's religion. His followers captured the Roman state. Whose judgment was judgment unto victory (Matt. 12:20)?

B. Judgment Unto Victory

Jesus Christ's judgment is judgment unto victory. This is a crucial covenantal concept. His sanctions in history, both positive and negative, lead to the long-term victory of His kingdom. The gates of hell can-

1. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 10.

2. Kenneth L. Gentry, *The Greatness of the Great Commission: The Christian Enterprise in a Fallen World* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

3. David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

not defend against the kingdom of God (Matt. 16:18). All Christians believe this. They debate over the issue of whether this victory will be universally manifested both in history and eternity or only in eternity. This is a debate between amillennialists on one side and both premillennialists and postmillennialists on the other. Then there is another divisive eschatological question. Will His kingdom's victory occur prior to His physical reappearance in history? This question divides premillennialists from postmillennialists. Rival social philosophies and social theories result from these rival eschatological positions.[4]

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul presents the biblical case for Christians' authority in history and their obligation to render judgments in history. There are two views of the world, Paul says in the early section of the epistle. They divide over the meaning of the cross (I Cor. 1:18). Each view judges the other to be foolish.[5] There are two inescapably judgmental worldviews. One or the other must predominate in society.

Paul also calls on the Corinthians to judge each other formally in church courts (I Cor. 6:1–11).[6] Is this a call for Christians to retreat from covenant-breaking society, or is it a call for them to prepare to judge covenant-breaking society? Again, the rival eschatological interpretations differ.

1. Victory Over Death

Chapter 15 of this epistle challenges the amillennial view. Paul insists that Christ will defeat all of his enemies in history, including the last one: death.

> For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all (vv. 22–28).

4. Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

5. Chapter 1.

6. Chapter 6.

Paul makes this clear: only after Christ has defeated all of His enemies in history will He judge the world. The defeat over death is the final victory. Then Christ will hand over this world to His Father. Paul's language leaves very little wiggle room, exegetically speaking. This passage can be dealt with exegetically in a straightforward manner by postmillennialists and premillennialists, but amillennialists must deny the literalness of its description of Christ's visible victory over His enemies. They do this by interpreting Paul's plain words as symbolic of something else—exactly what, it is difficult for them to say. The text's language is much clearer than amillennial expositions of it.[7]

2. Continuity, Not Discontinuity

Jesus' parable of the tares and wheat (Matt. 13) eliminates the possibility of both post-tribulation and mid-tribulation dispensationalism. The parable plainly teaches that there will be no separation of Christians from non-Christians in history.[8] This leaves only historic premillennialism, post-tribulational dispensationalism, and post-millennialism as possible interpretations of chapter 15.

Premillennialism predicts a future political reign on earth by Jesus, beginning one thousand years before the final judgment. Thus, Christ's judgment in history is seen by premillennialists as two-fold: through His people by means of an international, bureaucratic chain of command, but also personally, at the top of both the political and ecclesiastical judicial pyramids. Premillennialists rarely discuss what justice will be like during the future millennial kingdom of Christ in history. By refusing to discuss this, premillennialists implicitly reject the suggestion that today's institutions will set any significant precedents for the future. Premillennialists, by their silence regarding the institutional structure of the millennial era, imply that there will be a sharp discontinuity between institutional judgment in the pre-millennial era and judgment during the millennial kingdom era.

The postmillennial view allows for Christianity's victory in history and also today's judicial-institutional continuity with the millennial era of victory. The concept of Christ's representative victory in history through His servants' dominion is unique to postmillennialism. Any discontinuity between today's world and the future era of Christian victory is comparative, not absolute. That is, this view of discontinuity

7. Chapter 14.

8. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 29.

does not allow for resurrected, sin-free incorruption to operate in the midst of sinful corruption. Jesus alone possessed this unique distinction in history, both before and after His resurrection. Postmillennialism preserves Paul's doctrine of the separation of corruption from incorruption. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (I Cor. 15:50). Neither does incorruption inherit corruption. Christ will not reign in person on earth in history, either with or without resurrected Christians who will serve as His official sanctions-bringers.

This means that God's judgment in history—point four of the biblical covenant[9]—will be progressively established representatively—point two[10]—by covenant-keepers, which will eventually produce the millennial era of victory (point five).[11] How? By enforcing God's Bible-revealed law (point three).[12]

C. The Primary Theme of First Corinthians

This epistle is heavily judgmental of the congregation in Corinth. Paul calls them contentious (I Cor. 1:11). He calls them carnal (I Cor. 3:1). He defends himself against their critical judgment of his ministry (I Cor. 4:3). He deals with a major sin in the congregation: incest (I Cor. 5:1). He criticizes them for taking their disputes into pagan civil courts (I Cor. 6:1). He warns them against sinning against weak brethren (I Cor. 8:12). He warns them against violating the sanctity of the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:21–22, 29–30).

Is there a common theme? Yes: *the inescapable task of rendering judgments in history*. This epistle makes it clear that there can be no neutrality, morally speaking. Men must make moral judgments. Then they must render judgment, i.e., speak and act in terms of their moral judgments. Judgments are either good or evil, wise or foolish. They are never morally neutral. Judgments are made in terms of a scale of values, and this scale of values is either covenant-keeping or covenant-breaking.

In chapter 1, he criticizes the Corinthian church for being contentious. Members have divided into factions based on their personal

9. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 4.

10. Sutton, ch. 2; North, ch. 2.

11. Sutton, ch. 5; North, ch. 5.

12. Sutton, ch. 3; North, ch. 3.

commitment to one or another co-founder of the congregation. This must cease, Paul says. The debate, he says, is not between this or that co-founder of the local congregation. Rather, the debate is between defenders of the cross and scoffers. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent" (vv. 18–19). Paul does not here deny the legitimacy of confrontation. On the contrary, he affirms it. There is necessary contention between consistent covenant-keepers and consistent covenant-breakers. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (v. 20).

There must be judgments in history. Paul says that God has enabled His people to render accurate judgments in history.

> But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (I Cor. 2:10–13).

Christians are supposed to render judgments in history as God's stewards. "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (I Cor. 4:1–2). We are required by Christ to render judgment on God's behalf, not our own. We are God's agents, responsible to Him. We are subordinate to the God who renders authoritative judgment. God judges representatively as well as directly. Representative judgment must begin with formal judgment by the church against the enemies within. "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (I Cor. 5:12–13).

D. Economic Judgment

To judge is to impute. To impute is to make a declaration. A civil jury is supposed to use binding legal standards in order to evaluate the facts placed before it during the trial. Then it renders judgment: "guilty" or "not guilty." This is also the conceptual model for eco-

nomic imputation. As decision-makers, everyone must make continual evaluations and then make a declaration: good or bad.

1. Scale of Value

In economics, to judge is to attribute value—meaning importance—to a scarce economic resource, meaning any asset that commands a free market price. The individual evaluates what something is worth to him. The word "evaluate" even contains the root English word for value. In order to evaluate what something is worth to him, he must first possess a hierarchical standard of value or personal ends. Then he assesses the position of the thing to be purchased or not purchased, acted upon or ignored, in terms of his personal scale of value. This scale of value is not scientifically measurable, but it does allow ranking. It is an ordinal scale—first, second, third—rather than cardinal: exactly this much more or less.

I say it again: *to impute value is to make an estimation of something's importance on one's personal scale of values*. This scale of values has a time component. Every decision is a decision about the future. Every decision also has an eternal component. Paul makes this clear in his discussion of final things. "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (I Cor. 3:8). "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (I Cor. 3:13). This is an extension of Christ's warning: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).[13]

Taking into consideration what he regards as relevant, a decision-maker then decides whether or not to take some action. He first imputes value; then he acts in terms of this imputation. The outcome of all of the competing and cooperating subjective individual decisions in an economy is an array of objective prices. Subjective individual imputations produce corporate objective prices. Individual values are manifested publicly—declared—through prices.

2. Value and Price

It is the relationship between individual value and objective price that is the heart of economic analysis. Value and price are related, and it is the task of the economist to explain this relationship in terms of

13. Gary North, *Trust and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Mark* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 11.

economic theory. It is a task that has baffled secular economists for centuries. A price is objective. Is value objective or subjective? Value, most economists have said since the 1870s, is subjective. It is imputed by acting men. The free market's objective array of prices results from competitive bidding by economic actors who independently impute subjective value to objectively scarce resources—resources that command a price. The theoretical debate begins here. Is the free market's objective array of prices in some way morally justified—legitimate—because of the interplay between subjective value and objective scarcity? Economists hate to raise the issue of moral justification, but there is no escape. Men ask: "Does a free market price incorporate justice, even though it is the result of an unequal initial distribution of resources among the bidders? Does the array of free market prices maximize social value? Is there even such a thing as social value?" These debates never end. They never get resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

Oscar Wilde defined a cynic as a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. This is very close to what Jesus taught about value and price, except that He did not limit His observation to cynics. Covenant-breakers are fools, He said, because they do not understand what is truly valuable in this life. They are seduced by the lure of temporal wealth. They are like the rich man who made plans to build more barns in order to store his overflowing wealth. "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:20–21).[14]

3. The Mind of Christ

To render accurate judgment, a person must have the mind of Christ. The Christian definitively possesses this. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:16).[15] It is every Christian's God-given task to improve his ability to render godly judgment over time. There should be progressive sanctification in each Christian's rendering of judgment. There should also be progressive sanctification in each Christian institution's rendering of judgment.

---

14. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 24.

15. Chapter 2.

In the field of economics, the decision-making Christian is called on by God to assess the value of scarce economic resources, including the forfeited opportunities associated with owning one thing rather than another, and also the value of his investment of irreplaceable time, in terms of God's special call to him as a steward. The Christian should put an objective price on resources based on his understanding of their value to God. Jesus said, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matt. 13:45–46).[16] The Christian should think God's thoughts after Him, for he has the mind of Christ. Inescapably, he must judge as a representative agent—a steward—of God.

Conclusion

Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians is a call to every Christian to get his priorities straight and then make judgments in terms of them. Men's judgments are initially subjective: the subjective imputation of subjectively perceived value. These subjective judgments become objective through men's decisions. Each person's subjective value scale at any point in time is judged by God in terms of His objective value. God, as both Creator and Judge, imputes value according to His subjective scale of values. But His subjective scale of values is objectively authoritative in history and eternity. In God is the reconciliation of subjective value and objective value. His scale of values is objectively true, not because God conforms Himself to standards that are external to Him and authoritative over Him, but because He is absolutely sovereign.

Christians are required by God to act in terms of what they believe to be true. Economically speaking, Christians should buy and sell in terms of what they believe. As men move through time, they continually exchange one condition for another. Possessing the mind of Christ, Christians are guided by the Spirit of God. They are supposed to accept this guidance. They are supposed to assess their situations in terms of this guidance, and then act in terms of this assessment. This is the integrating message of First Corinthians.

16. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 31.

1

TWO KINDS OF FOOLISHNESS

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

I CORINTHIANS 1:18–25

The theocentric focus here is the wisdom of God. It is contrasted with fallen man's knowledge, which fallen man regards as wise. God does not.

What is wisdom? The ability to identify the law of God and then to apply it: render judgment. Judgment is point four of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. Foolishness: An Inescapable Concept

1. The Cross

Here, Paul assails the wisdom of this world. This world's wisdom regards the cross of Christ as foolishness. In contrast, the redeemed

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 4.

person knows that the cross is the power of God. Between these two assessments there is no common ground. Each regards the other's position as foolish. Paul is saying that there is no escape from the concept of foolishness. The question is: Who or what is truly foolish? By what standard? Decided by whom?

His use of "the cross" is broad. It refers to the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ: the death and bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead. The cross is the heart of Paul's message of redemption. Later in this epistle, he writes: "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (I Cor. 15:14). "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Cor. 15:17). The centrality of the cross is the centrality of the bodily resurrection of Christ. Christ's resurrection was God's visible, historical, definitive sanction on death. This is the essence of the gospel for Paul. This is the good news.

The wisdom of this world denies the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Christ. It also denies the final resurrection and the final judgment of mankind. This was made clear during Paul's preaching in Athens on Mars' Hill. "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter" (Acts 17:32). This was the divisive doctrine for Paul's listeners.

I argue in this commentary that the central theme of this epistle is judgment: point four of the biblical covenant. Paul begins this epistle with a discussion of the cross. The cross remains the supreme manifestation of God's judgment in history: the sacrifice of God's son. This was a far greater judgment than the curses placed on Adam and Eve, including death. They were guilty. Jesus Christ was innocent. The supreme judgment fell on an innocent man who was also God.

Paul argues here that the defining characteristic of godly wisdom is an affirmation of the redemptive power of the cross of Christ. The defining characteristic of this world's wisdom is its denial of the redemptive power of the cross of Christ. These two positions are irreconcilable. There is no common ground between them. Paul begins with the assumption of the irreconcilable nature of these rival interpretations of reality. As he says later in this epistle, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).[2]

2. Chapter 2.

The power of the cross means different things to covenant-breakers and covenant-keepers. For covenant-breakers, the cross is the power of physical death over physical life. They deny the historical fact of Christ's literal bodily resurrection. For covenant-keepers, the cross is the power of God's redemption over sin and death. They affirm His bodily resurrection. For covenant-breakers, the cross manifests the superiority of this world's power over the power of God's covenantal redemption in history. For covenant-keepers, the cross manifests the power of God's comprehensive redemption over the power of this world.

2. Making Accurate Judgments

Paul is saying here that the only correct basis for making accurate judgments about reality is to begin with a presupposition: the redemptive power of the cross. Put another way, the only basis for making accurate judgments is to assume the redemptive reality of the cross, which was the supreme act of judgment in history: God's judgment of His son, followed by Christ's judgment on the power of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The supreme judgment of God that was manifested at the cross is the covenant-keeper's basis for making subordinate judgments. *God's definitive historical judgment against sin is to serve as the basis of covenant-keeping man's progressive judgments against both sin and error*. Covenant-keeping man's progressive rendering of judgment against both sin and intellectual error is an aspect of the kingdom of God in history. This is another way of saying that God extends His kingdom in history by empowering His people to render judgments as His representatives, even as Adam and Eve should have rendered judgment against Satan by rendering judgment against Satan's representative, the serpent.[3] This empowerment is based on covenant-keepers' confession of faith in Paul's view of the cross.

God promises to bring to naught the wisdom of this world. "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent" (v. 19). God promises to bring negative sanctions against the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent. Paul is using "wise" and "prudent" ironically: the wisdom and understanding of the covenant-breaking world. The wisdom of this world defies God's law. God will bring the wise to naught, i.e., to nothing. This is God's negative sanction.

3. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1987] 2012), Appendix E: "Witnesses and Judges."

God eventually brings positive sanctions in history on covenant-keepers (Ps. 72) and negative sanctions against covenant-breakers. "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors" (Ps. 73:17–19). God will eventually bring negative sanctions against this world's "best and brightest."

3. Rhetoric (Persuasion)

Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (v. 20). He identifies three types of men as defenders of foolishness: the wise, the scribe, and the disputer. Yet wisdom is not wrong. Solomon was wise (I Ki. 3:12). Also, it is not that the ability to write that is itself wrong. Paul wrote epistles. Finally, it is not that disputation is always wrong. Paul is spoken of as having disputed with critics. "And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him" (Acts 9:29). Paul is contrasting rival forms of wisdom, rival writers, and rival disputers. The dividing issue here is the correct knowledge of God. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (v. 21). This is an extension of John's observation regarding Jesus. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:10–13). Accurate knowledge about God's agent of redemption is closed to those who rely on the wisdom of this world.

Paul adopts a rhetorical technique: attributing to God the infirmities of men. "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (v. 25). He does this in order to contrast two kinds of knowledge. He contrasts the worst of God (as if there could be a worst of God) with the best of mankind. God's worst is superior to man's best. Paul is not saying that God is foolish. He is saying that whatever foolish men regard as the foolishness of God is nevertheless wiser than they are. The same rhetorical technique is evident in Paul's reference to the weakness of God.

4. The Great Reversal

God has a purpose in all this. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Cor. 1:27–29). The wisdom of this world will be confounded by that which the world's wise men regard as foolish. Similarly, the strong will be shamed by the weak. By using the base things of this world to outshine the "things that are"—*the powers that be*—God intends to glorify Himself.

Paul is arguing that there will someday be a great overturning by God. "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent" (v. 19). This overturning will be comprehensive. It will elevate those who are today abased. It will tear down those who affirm the wisdom of this world. This great overturning will reveal for all to see that the world's system has rewarded those whose spiritual heirs will be forced to surrender their authority to covenant-keepers. This will be God's judgment on this world's system, i.e., its system of sanctions.

Paul is saying that there are rival systems of interpretation regarding cause and effect in history. These rival systems are irreconcilable. They are based on rival views of God, man, law, sanctions, and the future: the covenant. But the heart of the matter, he says here, is their rival views of sanctions. This is manifested in their rival interpretations of the cross as the agency of sanctions: either the world's victory over God's system of redemption, or else God's victory over this world through the bodily resurrection of His son.

B. This World and the World to Come

What constitutes the essence of this foolish world? Paul is speaking of a world that is opposed to his view of the cross. He makes this plain in his opening sentence. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (v. 18). Men's rival opinions regarding the cross are what separate this world from the world to come. Paul does not identify this future world by a specific time.

It could be argued that this coming world is eschatological: either eternity in contrast to time, or else a triumphant manifestation of

God's kingdom in history in contrast to the present. But this passage is not a time text. It does not provide evidence regarding the estimated time of arrival of the world to come.

Isaiah provided insight into the locus of the world to come: history. He prophesied regarding a future era in which there will still be churls. This is clearly a pre-resurrection world:

> Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful. For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right. But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand (Isa. 32:1–8).

Here we have pictured a future world in which men will act consistently with what they believe. They will also recognize the difference between the person who shows liberality and the churl. The liberal person will speak his mind openly. He will not conceal the truth. "The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful." Clearly, this is not today's world. It was not Paul's world, either.

Paul identifies his era as one in which foolishness reigns supreme in terms of its own pretended authority. Foolish men make judgments in terms of foolish standards. Those who are in positions of authority do not recognize the redemptive power of the cross. Not recognizing this, they are incapable of recognizing anything else clearly. Their judgment is distorted, and the proof of this is their assessment of the cross. They look at their world, and they conclude what they have initially assumed: the judgment of God does not hang over it.

In Romans 11, Paul presents a prophecy of a world blessed by God in response to the re-grafting in of the Jews.[4] By combining Paul's prophecy with Isaiah's, we see the promise of a world to come in

4. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 6.

which men will make judgments in terms of wise standards. This is the promise of epistemological reconstruction. Men will agree with each other regarding what is foolish and what is wise.

This transformation will be more than epistemological. It will also be ethical. The epistemological question regarding what men know truly and how they can know it is always a question of regeneration. Paul writes in the next chapter: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:14–16).[5] To have the mind of Christ is to be regenerated by God's grace through the power of the cross.

The world to come will be different from today's world. It will be a world in which the gospel has transformed large numbers of people. The Bible's standards of moral judgment and people's ability to make judgments in terms of these standards will be widely distributed.

Paul was writing about the cross. Men's opinions regarding the cross still divide them from one another. Most people today know nothing of the cross, and among those who have heard of God's plan of salvation, most believe that the cross is foolishness. In contrast, redeemed people believe that faith in the cross provides power: over sin, over death, over the devil. There is an irreconcilable division here. This division of opinion in history reflects the permanent division in mankind's eternal condition: the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14–15) vs. the New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21; 22).

C. The Question of Social Cooperation

The epistemological question is this: If rival views of what constitutes foolishness really do divide mankind, then on what basis can men share accurate information? If these two interpretive frameworks really are irreconcilable, which Paul says they are, then how can men cooperate through the division of labor, including the intellectual division of labor? How can society exist? It obviously does exist. But how is this possible, given the truth of Paul's assertion regarding rival definitions of foolishness? How can fools and wise people continue to cooperate in history?

5. Chapter 2.

Paul elsewhere answers this question in his discussion of the human heart. He wrote to the church at Rome that the *work* of the law—though not the law itself—is written on the heart of every person. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Rom. 2:14–15).[6] The law of God is written on the heart of every redeemed person. This has fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah regarding the coming covenant (Jer. 31:31–33). We read in Hebrews:

> But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away (Heb. 8:6–13).

Between the covenant-keeper and the covenant-breaker, there are two epistemological-ethical connections: first, the *image of God* in every person; second, the *work of the law* written in every heart. The regeneration of one group makes the dividing issues clearer to both groups: foolishness vs. wisdom. Covenant-breakers and covenant-keepers see the differences between them ever-more clearly as each group becomes progressively more consistent with its rival presuppositions regarding the cross.

This increasing self-consciousness is a liability for covenant-breakers. The more that covenant-breaking people hold back the truth in unrighteousness, as Paul said they do (Rom. 1:18), the less they can

6. North, *Cooperation and Dominion*, ch. 2.

agree with each other and cooperate with each other. That is, the more ethically self-conscious they become, meaning the more consistent their behavior is with their covenant-breaking worldviews, the less they can benefit from the division of labor. They will not trust others sufficiently to become increasingly dependent on them. They will do unethical things that alienate prospective associates. They will not gain the cooperation they need to maximize their market-produced income. It is said that there is honor among thieves. As thieves become more consistent to their thievery, there will be less honor binding them. Their power will decrease.

Confessions of faith always have social, political, and cultural consequences.[7] Confessions of faith cannot be limited to the mind. They have implications for human action. They spread from philosophy to behavior, from ideas to action. Confessions affect what individuals think. Therefore, the affect what individuals do. This means that they affect what people do *jointly*. A particular view of the way the world works affects the way that those who hold this view behave. Paul is saying that foolishness has consequences. Psalm 53 describes the results of foolishness: scattering.

> To the chief Musician upon Mahalath, Maschil, A Psalm of David. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread: they have not called upon God. There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them. Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad (Ps. 53:1–6).

D. Adam Smith on the Natural Social Order

Adam Smith's theory of individual economic motivation becomes important whenever we search for an explanation of men's cooperation. Smith argued in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) that men's individual self-interest is what leads them to trade with other men. In pursuing his own self-interest, an individual voluntarily enters into exchanges

7. R. J. Rushdoony, *Foundations of Social Order: Studies in the Creeds and Councils of the Early Church*, 3rd ed.(Vallecito, California: Ross House, [1968] 1998).

with others. In this way, individual self-interest furthers social cooperation and the division of labor. This, in turn, increases output per unit of resource input.

Here are two questions that Smith had to answer. (1) How can the voluntary actions of competing individuals extend both social order and economic growth? (2) How do men's selfish actions create wealth for nations and not just wealth for themselves? Smith appealed to nature in search of answers. Smith regarded men's universal decisions to "truck and barter" as natural. That is, no one in authority needs to threaten to impose negative sanctions in order to persuade people to trade. They trade on their own authority, for their own purposes. A familiar folk phrase is this one: "Necessity is the mother of invention." Necessity here is assumed to be impersonal, imposed by scarcity, which is natural.

1. Natural Liberty

Smith extended his argument from the individual to society. There is a natural order of liberty, he said. Voluntary trade would still exist even if there were no civil governments that interfere with trade by imposing taxes, rules, and other impediments to voluntary exchange. This is what he meant by "the natural order of liberty." It was in contrast to what we might call "the unnatural order of political coercion." Throughout most of *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith discusses the decisions of the civil government as unnatural and restrictive. These restrictions interfere with what otherwise would take place. They undermine men's liberty, and they thereby undermine the natural growth of wealth. Smith argued that economic growth is natural. Political restrictions that curtail voluntary exchange thereby also curtail economic growth, and are therefore unnatural. He revolutionized economic theory by proclaiming economic growth as being part of the natural order of things. For millennia, at least until the Puritans' doctrine of postmillennialism, men had believed that progress is unsustainable, long term. "What goes up must come down." Nations rise and fall. Smith's theory of the wealth of nations applied to economic theory what Puritan eschatology a century earlier had applied to the doctrine of God's kingdom in history: a theory of compound economic growth.

Smith argued that scarcity in nature can be overcome through an increase in the division of labor. He began his book with what has become the most famous passage in economics: the description of the

pin-makers, whose output is multiplied enormously by tools. It takes capital to create these tools. Because producers seek to increase their personal wealth by increasing the productivity of their workers, capital formation that funds innovation can steadily, "naturally" lead to the conquest of nature's scarcity. Nature's resources are scarce, Smith recognized, as did his Enlightenment peers. Smith revolutionized social theory by arguing that what is natural—scarcity—can be progressively overcome by what is also natural: the natural system of liberty. If men are simply left alone—laissez-faire—by civil government, their individual self-interest will lead them to trade with others, which will increase the traders' output, which will increase their wealth, which will increase society's wealth. The system of natural liberty, he argued, is the basis of the wealth of nations.

Smith's argument regarding the productivity of voluntary exchange soon became the central theoretical pillar of free market economics. It also became the most familiar version of what I call right-wing Enlightenment social theory. Smith moved the West's discussion of the foundations of social order from the corporate decision-making of politics to the individual decision-making in a free market. He placed the origin of economic order in the self-interested but peaceful decisions of individuals. He became the most famous and the most influential exponent of the Scottish Enlightenment tradition, which regarded social order as both unplanned and evolutionary.

2. The Problem of Sin

Smith recognized that there is a problem that is apparently not solved by the system of natural liberty: sin. How can men secure their liberty and their property from the sin-based predations of others? The universal answer is political coercion. It was also Smith's answer. Smith was not an anarchist. He believed that civil government is necessary to restrict private coercion and fraud. But he also recognized that civil government can become a tool of predation. His book emphasizes this aspect of civil government. He also believed that justice can be provided by the free market.[8] He did not resolve this theoretical problem: the maximization of natural liberty vs. the suppression of sin. Sin is unquestionably natural.

That men are sinful was widely understood by Enlightenment social theorists. They argued that men are not totally depraved, but this

8. Gary M. Anderson, "Adam Smith, Justice, and the System of Natural Liberty," *Journal of Libertarian Studies*, XIII (Summer 1997).

did not lead them to abandon the doctrine of sin—just the Christian doctrine of original sin and the Christian doctrine of redemption. For over a century before Smith, English political theorists had taken up the challenge of Thomas Hobbes: to explain how individuals join with each other to create civil government for the sake of maintaining peace. The doctrine of the social compact was popular in Smith's day, but the establishment of this compact was understood as an event of hypothetical history, not an actual event. Enlightenment scholars knew that no group of men had come together far in the misty past to establish a society through a contract. The story of such an event was hypothetical history. It was a device for defending the legitimacy of civil government.

E. Rousseau's Rival Theory: Hypothetical History

The Enlightenment distinguished between factual history and hypothetical history: the way a sequence of events logically must have happened, even though there is no documentary evidence that it did happen this way. The classic formulation of this hypothetical approach to history is found in Part I of Rousseau's 1754 essay, "A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality."

> Let us begin then by laying facts aside, as they do not affect the question. The investigations we may enter into, in treating this subject, must not be considered as historical truths, but only as mere conditional and hypothetical reasonings, rather calculated to explain the nature of things, than to ascertain their actual origin; just like the hypotheses which our physicists daily form respecting the formation of the world. Religion commands us to believe that, God Himself having taken men out of a state of nature immediately after the creation, they are unequal only because it is His will they should be so: but it does not forbid us to form conjectures based solely on the nature of man, and the beings around him, concerning what might have become of the human race, if it had been left to itself. This then is the question asked me, and that which I propose to discuss in the following discourse. As my subject interests mankind in general, I shall endeavour to make use of a style adapted to all nations, or rather, forgetting time and place, to attend only to men to whom I am speaking.[9]

Smith asserted a system of natural liberty by arguing that voluntary exchange exists naturally. Trade produces social cooperation and order; therefore, voluntary trade naturally leads to social order.

---

9. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality (1754), in The Social Contract and the Discourses*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (London: Dent, 1913).

Rousseau's position, presented in his book, *The Social Contract* (1762), appealed to a hypothetical General Will—a will that would manifest itself clearly, were it not for the distorting effects of voluntary associations. The General Will is thwarted by these local institutions and loyalties.[10] The General Will is natural; voluntary associations are not.

1. The General Will

The General Will is mankind's realm of true freedom, he said. It is incarnated in the central civil government, which alone can overcome the blinding and distorting influences of localism. Individuals are blinded to the General Will by their local loyalties. A centralized state alone speaks in the name of the General Will. Men's true self-interest is found in political participation at the highest level of civil government. Of course, there remains the problem of representation. Who speaks legitimately for the state on behalf of the General Will? Rousseau was vague on this point. Modern political theory has yet to find an agreed-upon answer.

Rousseau's theory of the General Will is the antithesis of Smith's theory of natural liberty. The debate centers around the issue of the meaning of "natural." Smith argued that what is natural is what men do naturally, on their own authority, in their own self-interest. Rousseau argued that what is natural is the social order that would exist if only men understood their true self-interest, which they cannot perceive because of the distorting influence of local and personal interests. Smith offered as evidence the visible practices of acting men: they trade voluntarily when left alone by the state. Rousseau offered hypothetical history (the social compact) and a hypothetical General Will.

Smith explained the actual operations of a complex economy, not a hypothetical world somewhere over the rainbow, either in the misty past or the misty future. He did rely to some degree on a hypothetical construct in order to explain the daily workings of a free market social order: what men would do if there were no state intervention. This construct was at least partially grounded in reality: what men actually do when left alone by the state, i.e., trade. Smith offered an explanation that was also consistent with the widely accepted theory of human selfishness. His economic theory became one of the pillars of the right-wing Enlightenment's social theory, along with his friend

10. Robert A. Nisbet, *Tradition and Revolt: Historical and Sociological Essays* (New York: Random House, 1968), ch. 1: "Rousseau and the Political Community."

Edmund Burke's defense of political localism. But his explanation was challenged by the intellectual heirs of Rousseau, who triumphed institutionally for most of the twentieth century through a series of statist political movements. By 1950, the academic and political defenders of Adam Smith's economics were few and far between—mostly concentrated at the University of Chicago.

Rousseau's defense of state centralization gained wide acceptance by intellectuals for over two centuries. Few political theorists followed him in his theory of the General Will, which had been the foundation of his social theory. This concept was far too metaphysical for the tastes of modern intellectuals, especially after Darwin had undermined their faith in the existence of purposeful nature. Rousseau's political ideas were successful because he justified centralized political power in the name of individual freedom. His political theory justified the left-wing Enlightenment's quest for political power in the name of the sovereign people.

2. The Fall of the Soviet Union

By the year 2000, Smith's view had seemingly triumphed over Rousseau's, although it had been rejected for two centuries by left-wing Western intellectuals. What had changed everything was the unexpected failure of the Communist Party's attempted *coup* in the Soviet Union, August 19–21, 1991. On December 31, 1991, the Soviet Union committed suicide. The leaders dissolved it. Nothing like this had ever happened before: a bloodless dissolution of a gigantic empire.

The visible failure of left-wing Enlightenment social theory—Marx's and especially Engels' top-down theory of social organization under socialism[11]—in 1991 left its defenders almost speechless. Contrary to all expectations, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had failed to maintain its power. Left-wing Enlightenment thought for two centuries had worshipped power in the name of freedom, beginning publicly with the French Revolution. The economic poverty of the Soviet Union had been visible to anyone who visited the country, but left-wing intellectuals had long denied the relevance of what they actually saw in the name of a hoped-for economic future and present-day military power.[12] The Soviet Union, in the words of

11. Frederick Engels, "On Authority" (1873), in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 23 (New York: International Publishers, 1988), pp. 422–25.

12. Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China and Cuba, 1928–1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

Richard Grenier in the mid-1980s, was Bangladesh with missiles, but for left-wing intellectuals, Soviet society's legitimacy resided in those missiles. When the Communist Party visibly lost power in 1991, both Communism and socialism lost legitimacy among left-wing intellectuals, worldwide.

The triumph of Adam Smith's right-wing Enlightenment theory of social order through individual self-interest was achieved in intellectual circles overnight, but more by default than by widespread conversion. Intellectuals long for the good old days. They still dream of exercising political power over others. They had long believed that the exercise of such power would make society rich. Instead, it universally bankrupted every centrally planned economy. The failure was universal. Private property produces increasing per capita wealth; central planning produces economic irrationality and mindless bureaucracy. This is an unpleasant truth that left-wing intellectuals had resisted for two centuries.[13] Smith turned out to be correct about the basis of the wealth of nations.

Smith's theory of economic coordination through impersonal free market forces created by individual competition—supply and demand—assumes the existence of universal standards of economic value. It assumes, above all, that men prefer more to less at any given price. This presumption remains at the heart of modern economic analysis. But there is a problem with this assumption. The Bible says regarding moral wisdom, "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death" (Prov. 8:36). This means that the rival forms of foolishness are ultimately not in agreement on values, even the values of life and death. How, then, can Christian social theorists explain social cooperation? What is the basis of the agreement that makes social cooperation possible?

G. Universally Agreed-Upon Benefits

Men are made in God's image (Gen. 1:26). This means that they share a common perception and a common rationalism, without which social life would be impossible. This common rationalism is held back through man's rebellion, but it cannot be completely erased from rational minds. It is sufficient to condemn men before God. It is also sufficient to enable the formation of economies and societies.

Moses told the Israelites to obey God; God would bless them if

13. Tom Bethell, *The Noblest Triumph: Property and Prosperity Through the Ages* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998).

they did (Deut. 28:1–14).[14] These blessings would be visible to foreigners. Foreigners would recognize the beneficial nature of these blessings. Moses said: "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deut. 4:5–8).[15] Yet these foreigners are covenant-breakers. How can they recognize the truth?

In the modern industrial world, perhaps the greatest of all blessings is the high survival rate of children. In the second half of the twentieth century, the great child-crippling and child-killing diseases were overcome in the industrial nations, at least for the time being. Parents today can be confident that, statistically, all of their children will probably survive them. This benefit of modern civilization would be recognized as the supreme benefit, or close to it, by the vast majority of cultures throughout history. Burying one's child is one of the most emotionally painful of all events in this life. Burying more than one child during a marriage was common two centuries ago, extending back as far as recorded history extends. Smith spoke of Scottish highland women in the seventeenth century who had borne 20 children and buried 18.[16] This is no longer common in the industrial West.

So, foolishness regarding the cross is an underlying foolishness—an ultimate foolishness—whose economic effects can be overcome in history through individual self-interest. *There is an inescapable* ***hierarchy of values*** *associated with the* ***image of God in man***. Men hold back the truth of God in their rebellion, but it takes a supreme act of will for someone to suppress the testimony of the work of the law in his heart. This cannot be done completely. The covenant-breaker at the core of his rebellion loves death, but, like a drowning man, fights for life. He wants to stay afloat a bit longer. He will pay a great deal for

14. Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: [1999] 2012), ch. 69.

15. *Ibid.*, ch. 8.

16. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Bk. I, Ch. 8.

a life preserver. "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse," Shakespeare put in the mouth of Richard III. We understand the king's sentiment, given his military situation.

H. Compartmentalizing Foolishness

I want to achieve certain goals. I will be able to do this only by means of assistance from others. How can I gain their assistance? Answer: by begging, by compulsion, or by offering something that others may want in exchange for their help. Smith argued that offering something in voluntary exchange is by far the most effective way to gain the cooperation of others most of the time. Trade is the way to increase one's personal wealth. But, Smith also argued, it is also the way to increase national wealth. This includes trade across national borders. If people on one side of a border are benefitting by cross-border trade, then so are people on the other side. Members of both nations are getting richer; therefore, he concluded, so are the nations.

Wealth does not make covenant-breakers any less foolish in the sight of God. They are foolish regarding Christ, the cross, the resurrection, and salvation by grace through faith. They are not necessarily foolish regarding their ability to advance themselves through voluntary trade. The kind of foolishness that Paul speaks of in this passage is spiritual. Cornelius Van Til used to say that when a person is saved by grace, he does not receive a new set of brains. He also used to say that a covenant-breaker's thinking is like a rotary saw that is set at a wrong angle. No matter how much he sharpens the blade, it will not cut properly. If a covenant-breaker is smart, he possesses a competitive advantage over a less intelligent covenant-keeper. This advantage may not be decisive, but it exists. But until he has his ethical outlook realigned, he will not cut straight. His foolishness will remain, no matter how clever he is.

The question is: Which kind of foolishness will win the culture war? The foolishness of covenant-breakers or covenant-keepers? Covenant-breakers seem to have the advantage: there are so many of them. Most of the institutions of modern life have been designed by the use of blueprints that accommodate off-angle rotary saws. This seems to point to defeat for Christ's kingdom in history. But social reality intervenes, as does God, who has established the covenantal laws of society. The laws governing society, like the laws of economics, favor productivity. Covenant-keeping increases productivity. Many commonplaces of Western civilization reflect basic social and per-

sonal truths. "Honesty is the best policy." "A penny saved is a penny earned." (This is incorrect today: a penny saved is approximately 1.4 pennies earned, depending on your income tax bracket.) All of reality is structured in terms of God's law. Reality places constraints on all institutions. Anyone who wishes to achieve success through participation in the division of labor is pressured by reality to conform to God's social and economic laws. Institutions that were designed poorly in order to fit foolish men's off-center rotary saws will deteriorate rapidly or even collapse. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 is the best example I know.

Foolishness about the cross is always a liability. Such foolishness cannot be kept perfectly compartmentalized. It flows through the moral cracks that exist in all foundations and walls. Societies progressively reflect their people's view of the cross. If the cross is power, as Paul says it is, then foolishness regarding the cross is weakness. This weakness will be progressively revealed as history moves toward its eschatological culmination.

Conclusion

Paul's concept of mankind's two kinds of foolishness points to the triumph of God's kingdom in history. *The wisdom of the cross spreads into other areas of men's minds*. It restructures redeemed men's vision. It recognizes God's supremacy over time and redemption's supremacy over sin. It realigns the off-angle rotary saws of this world. Over time, it produces visible wealth. Over time, men will see the difference that God's law makes economically. *The foolishness of the cross produces economic success*. Foolishness against the cross erodes the social foundations of apostate societies.

Paul returns to this theme later in his epistle. "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain" (I Cor. 3:18–20). God uses the confidence of the covenant-breaker to destroy his plans. In fact, even the verse Paul cites is an example of this. "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong" (Job 5:13). This was Eliphaz's admonition of Job. God later excoriated him for his criticisms of Job (Job 42:7). Eliphaz was too wise for his own good. He cited the truth, but applied it incorrectly to Job's situation.

Foolishness cannot be permanently compartmentalized. It spreads. Churls will come to no good end. Fools will fare poorly. But these developments take time to manifest themselves. Psalm 73 follows Psalm 72, but, in the history of mankind, Psalm 73 precedes Psalm 72. Psalm 73 deals with the temporary visible successes of the wicked.[17] Psalm 72 deals with a righteous king whose rule transforms his society. "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed" (Ps. 72:16–17).

In the meantime, the image of God in all men leads almost all men to affirm certain truths, such as this one: more is better than less at the same price. Covenant-breakers and covenant-keepers can work together cooperatively in order to attain their common goal—the goal of *more*—even though their present presuppositions and long-term goals are at war.

The nearly universal goal of increased personal wealth is made less costly to attain by means of voluntary exchange. People become wealthier when they successfully serve customers. The free market's principle of service to customers as a means to greater personal wealth is consistent with Christ's description of Christian leadership. "And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve" (Luke 22:25–26).[18]

What is natural for natural man is not service but domination, coercion, and pillage. Hobbes' theory of man in the state of nature is closer to the truth of what natural man is than Smith's theory of the natural system of liberty. Smith lived in a Christian social order. So did Rousseau. Both men assumed what had to be proven, namely, that natural man is trustworthy. The Bible makes it plain that the more consistent natural man is with his covenant-breaking presuppositions, the less trustworthy he is. But his way of rebellion is ultimately suicidal. "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own

17. Gary North, *Confidence and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Psalms* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 17.

18. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 51.

soul: all they that hate me love death" (Prov. 8:36). Thus, to the extent that he seeks greater personal wealth in a society that honors biblical laws that prohibit private physical coercion and theft, he must conform himself to principles of success that are denied by his presuppositions. He must become inconsistent in his thinking in order to prosper. He must abide by the *work* of the law that is written in his heart (Rom. 2:14–15).

2

TWO KINDS OF MINDS

> *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.*
>
> I CORINTHIANS 2:14–16

The theocentric issue here is the mind of Christ, which is fundamentally at odds with the mind of covenant-breaking man. The covenant-keeper possesses the mind of Christ. This distinction divides covenant-keepers from covenant-breakers. The covenant-breaker neither receives nor perceives the things of the spirit. The difference is an issue of rendering judgment: point four of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. Tainted Knowledge

Paul continues his argument regarding the two kinds of knowledge. Here, he focuses on two kinds of mind: natural and spiritual. He calls the spiritual mind "the mind of Christ." The natural man does not receive the things of the spirit. *With this assertion, Paul sets forth his case against every variety of common-ground philosophy*. He distinguishes spiritual things from natural things. The natural man will not receive that which is spiritual.

How comprehensive are "the things of the spirit of God"? Are they limited to inner realms, such as personal salvation and its emotional

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 4.

results? Or are they limited to soul and church only? Or soul and church and family only? Are they limited to psychology? Or do they apply to the operations of physical nature? (As most people use the word "nature," they have in mind "natural," as distinguished from "supernatural.") When Paul says that natural men cannot understand the things of the spirit, does he mean that they cannot understand personal salvation? Or does he mean that they cannot understand the universe?

The answer is found in the previous chapter of this epistle, in which Paul contrasts two kinds of foolishness.[2] Paul applies this contrast to men's opinions regarding the cross and its redemptive ramifications. The natural man and the spiritual man interpret the cross differently, so they also interpret this world differently. These differences do not apply merely to isolated areas of the creation. They apply to all areas. The covenant-keeper sees this world as God's creation. The covenant-breaker doesn't, or else he defines both God and creation differently from what the Bible teaches.

This helps us to understand Paul's next assertion: "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man" (v. 15). The person with the mind of Christ makes judgments regarding all kinds of things. He considers all areas of life in terms of the mind of Christ. This does not mean that he makes no mistakes. It means that his explanation of cause and effect is based on the idea of God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. As Paul writes elsewhere, Christians give "thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:12–17). The covenant-breaker does not give thanks for any of this.

This raises a crucial question: *Can any aspect of God's creation be accurately interpreted apart from God's Spirit*? If the answer is *yes*, then at least one of two conclusions follows: (1) God's Spirit is sometimes inaccurate, since the interpreter has interpreted things differently from

2. Chapter 1.

the Spirit's interpretation; (2) God's Spirit is sometimes irrelevant, since the interpreter came to the same conclusion on his own authority. On the other hand, if the answer is *no*, then the covenant-breaker's accurate conclusion is based on the fact that he is at some point thinking inconsistently with his own presuppositions regarding God, man, law, cause and effect, or the future. God's Spirit actively restrains him from becoming consistent and therefore destructive. He is not interpreting anything apart from God's Spirit, who restrains him. This was one of Cornelius Van Til's numerous intellectual achievements: to show that anything the covenant-breaker says that happens to be true in some narrow sense is inconsistent with his own assumptions about the autonomy of both nature and man. He comes to the truth in a limited area of his thought only because he has made a mistake in logic. He is not epistemologically self-conscious.

We can see Paul's opposition to a common-ground philosophy in his suggestion that the things of the spirit provide the correct interpretive framework—the presuppositions—for the non-spirit realm. The Bible's doctrine of original sin has implications for man's self-knowledge. There are, in the language of theologians, noetic effects of sin. The natural man cannot receive the things of the spirit, Paul insists. How will the natural man be able to comprehend accurately the doctrine of original sin? How will those who affirm such a doctrine find ways to persuade natural men to think and act in terms of it? These are not hypothetical questions. They are at the heart of all civil law. What is right, and what is wrong? Which acts should a civil government prohibit by law? As Rushdoony asked in 1959: By what standard.[3]

Paul is here speaking about the cross of Christ. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (I Cor. 1:23). "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). The spiritual nature of the message of the cross is not accurately understood by the natural man. The natural man may hear the words, but he does not understand them. Paul had already experienced this phenomenon in Athens. None of his covenant-breaking listeners accepted his message. "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter" (Acts 17:32).

3. R. J. Rushdoony, *By What Standard? An Analysis of the Philosophy of Cornelius Van Til* (Vallecito, California: Ross House [1959] 1995).

The cross is the message of God's comprehensive judgment: negative (the crucifixion) and positive (the resurrection). God judged Jesus Christ in history, so that Christ's covenant people will not have to suffer God's negative sanctions in eternity. God judged Jesus Christ—declared Him guilty as charged—and then executed judgment. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21). Then God publicly judged sin and death through Christ's bodily resurrection.

The natural man rejects knowledge that is "tainted" by spirit. He resists it. Yet, whether he believes it or not, the natural man faces a world in which all knowledge is tainted by God's Spirit. All creation testifies to the truth of God, Paul taught (Rom. 1:18–22).[4] There is no escape from the testimony of God's Holy Spirit. Van Til once wrote that if there were one radio station that did not testify to the existence of God, natural man would listen to no other. But no such radio station exists. All creation testifies to the God of the Bible. The natural man rejects this testimony. He rejects the ideas of creation and providence.

This means that the natural man can never understand anything truly. He resists the testimony of all creation. He does not receive the things of the spirit, yet every aspect of creation testifies to God. So, he has to substitute rival explanations for the world he sees. For him, cause and effect in nature and history do not begin with the sovereign Creator God. This means that he cannot accurately understand cause and effect.

B. Rendering Judgment

Later in this epistle, Paul writes that covenant-keepers are required to render judgment against lawless people in the congregation. They must enforce God's sanctions. "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (I Cor. 5:11–13).

Covenant-keeping men are required to render judgments in history. These are comprehensive judgments. "But he that is spiritual

4. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 1.

judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man" (v. 15). This is a very obscure sentence. The first half is clear: godly men lawfully do render judgments. The second half is the problem passage: "yet he himself is judged of no man." Could this mean that no man other than Christ, as the only perfect man, can legitimately lay sustainable charges before God against the spiritual man? No. The church can render such judgments in Christ's name. "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:18–19). Church sanctions are a major theme in this epistle.

The fact that the covenant-keeper can lawfully render judgment on others means that others with the mind of Christ can do the same to him. Later in this epistle, Paul writes: "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (I Cor. 14:32). This implies hierarchy—point two of the biblical covenant.[5] Nevertheless, the covenant-keeper's worldview is not subordinate to the covenant-breaker's worldview. A covenant-keeper's judgments regarding the general authority of God over creation, and the Bible's authority over the minds of fallen men, cannot be judged authoritatively by covenant-breakers. This does not mean that the covenant-keeper is not subordinate to covenant-breakers who possess specialized technical knowledge, such as medicine or physics. It means that a covenant-breaker cannot legitimately speak authoritatively by means of his God-denying knowledge to challenge the covenant-keeper's confidence that God is sovereign in history.

The natural man seeks to undermine the spiritual man's commitment to the doctrine of the cross, but he cannot legitimately do this. He does not understand the cross. If this statement is correct, then Paul's sentence is a defense of the authority of the cross over the speculations of the self-professed autonomous man.

What about civil government? Can its ministers (Rom. 13:4)[6] lawfully render judgment against a spiritual man? Yes. The natural man in civil authority has been granted limited authority by God to impose biblical civil sanctions against convicted criminals.[7] Perhaps a

5. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, ch. 2.
6. North, *Cooperation and Dominion*, ch. 11.
7. *Idem*.

spiritual man sinned and deliberately broke the law, or broke it by mistake. Or perhaps the witnesses made a mistake or rendered false judgment. This does not give to the natural man the God-given authority to judge the theological confession of the spiritual man.

C. Economic Knowledge

Van Til denied that Christian philosophy is merely one partially valid philosophical approach among many. He said rather that Christian philosophy *alone* constitutes valid philosophy.[8] By this, he did not mean that anti-Christian philosophers do not sometimes make technical points that are consistent with what the Bible reveals. He meant that anti-Christian philosophers draw narrow but accurate implications from presuppositions about this world that are inconsistent with their conclusions.[9] The same general criticism applies to all other academic disciplines, including economics.

1. Science and Omniscience (Omni-Science)

Without the concept of an omniscient God, there can be no self-consistent science,[10] including economic science. There can only be logical inconsistencies parading as economic science. Without the concept of original ownership by the Creator God, who has delegated ownership to individuals and organizations in history, there can only be an incomplete economic theory. The judicial and logical foundation of ownership by man is stewardship to God: the dominion covenant (Gen. 1:26–28).[11] This, all modern schools of non-Christian economics deny. Christian economics directs economists' attention to the Bible in their search for accurate answers to real-world problems—answers that are not available, logically, to men who insist, for example, that it is impossible to make scientifically valid interpersonal comparisons of subjective utility, which means all of modern free market economics.[12]

Furthermore, every system of humanist economics moves from reason to intuition when it seeks to explain what it is that econo-

8. Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 1998), pp. 502–4.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 436–37, 451–53, 483–85.

10. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988).

11. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), chaps. 3, 4.

12. *Ibid.*, ch. 5.

mists know and how they can know it.[13] Intuition is irrational from the point of view of logic: something unexplained and inherently unexplainable. Economists continually draw implications for policy-makers that are based on theories that apply consistently only to a hypothetical realm in which all participants have perfect foreknowledge, or in which there are no transaction costs—search costs, negotiation costs, enforcement costs—in voluntary exchange.[14] Even the economists' beloved supply and demand curves are based on a logical antinomy: the assumption of infinitesimal continuity from one price and one quantity to the next. But only discrete prices and quantities are subject to human evaluation and therefore to human action. The decision-maker must be able to say, "A price is exactly this much higher or lower than the next price." Contiguous prices and quantities that are represented on a continuous line, and separated by infinitesimal distances, cannot apply to or result from the world of human action. There is no measurement of "this much" that separates any pair of infinitely tiny contiguous points on an infinitely continuous line. This is why calculus has nothing to do with the logic of economics as human action. Calculus makes economics appear to be as scientifically rigorous as physics. So, calculus has been adopted by the major schools of economic interpretation, the Austrian School excepted. Members of all schools draw supply and demand curves.[15]

2. Economic Science and Autonomy

As a professional scholarly discipline, economics was the first to reject self-consciously any appeal to the authority of either God or morality. Late-seventeenth-century British economists believed that there can be no logical reconciliation of rival theological and moral views. They had just suffered the English Civil War (1642–49), in which warring armies fought in the name of the same God and same Bible. Economists looked instead to autonomous economic logic and economic statistics as ways to gain agreement among all rational

13. Gary North, "Economics: From Reason to Intuition," in Gary North (ed.), *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective* (Vallecito, California: Ross House Books, 1976).

14. Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1999] 2012), Appendix A.

15. Ludwig von Mises never used curves, and Israel Kirzner did only in his intermediate level economics textbook, *Market Theory and the Price System* (Princeton, New Jersey: Van Nostrand, 1963), which he allowed to go out of print. The absence of curves and lines is consistent with Austrian School presuppositions regarding methodology.

investigators.[16] This confession of faith has stripped economists of any way logically to reconcile the antinomies of autonomous man's philosophy, which includes economic philosophy. It is ironic that, of all academic fields, economics should be regarded as the one most divided, even though its early practitioners justified their supposedly morally neutral methodology in terms of attaining widespread agreement. Popular aphorisms touch on the economists' inability to come to agreed-upon conclusions. "Where there are four economists, there will be five opinions." "If you stretched all of the world's economists end to end, they would never reach a conclusion." Or President Harry Truman's classic line, "Give me a one-armed economist." This was his response to a familiar saying of economists, repeated by the Chairman of his Council of Economic Advisors: "On the one hand.... On the other hand...."

It is significant that the foundational work of modern economics, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776), begins with a chapter on the division of labor. This chapter contains the most famous passage in the literature of economics, the description of the pin-makers. Yet Smith's strategy was conceptually wrong. He should have begun with ownership, not the division of labor. There is very little space in *Wealth of Nations* devoted to private property, i.e., ownership.[17] This turned out to be a strategic disaster for the intellectual defense of the free market, what Tom Bethell calls the economists' oversight.[18] Almost immediately after Smith's book appeared, socialist thinkers began to re-structure economics in terms of ownership by the state.[19] As Bethell shows, it took almost two centuries for academic economists to respond to the socialists with a rigorous theory of property rights.[20]

How could Smith have made such a strategic error? Why was this error not corrected early by economists? I believe that the most probable answer is the free market economists' ideology of value-free economics. The question of property raises the question of the moral right of ownership that undergirds the state's legal defense of property rights. In contrast, the economists could, they believed, speak authoritatively in a morally neutral manner regarding questions of

16. William Letwin, *The Origins of Scientific Economics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1963).

17. Tom Bethell, *The Noblest Triumph: Property and Prosperity Through the Ages* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998), p. 97.

18. *Ibid.*, ch. 7.

19. *Ibid.*, chaps. 8, 12.

20. *Ibid.*, ch. 20.

the division of labor. But, when it comes to property rights—"This bread is mine!"[21]—there is no intellectually honest way to avoid the issue of moral legitimacy. Free market economists nevertheless do their best to avoid the question of the moral basis of the right of private ownership. In the modern academic essay most notable for its discussion of the allocation of property rights by civil courts, R. H. Coase's "The Problem of Social Cost" (1960),[22] the author deliberately and openly leaves aside questions of equity.[23] This essay has become one of the most widely and approvingly cited essays in the world of academic economics. It became by far the most cited law review article ever written.[24] In the late 1960's, it became the basis of a new academic sub-discipline: law and economics. In 1991, Coase won the Nobel Prize in economics, in part for this essay. The next year, his colleague at the University of Chicago, Gary Becker, won the Nobel Prize for his application of Coase's theorem to the field of crime and punishment. He, too, is adamant about removing questions of morality from the field of law and economics.[25]

I began my introductory 1987 book on economics with the doctrine of God's original ownership of the world.[26] I am aware of no other book on economics that does.

Conclusion

Paul here provides Christians with the confidence necessary to challenge covenant-breakers who are in positions of leadership. The natural man does not receive the things of the spirit, Paul says. But things of the spirit encompass everything. There can be no neutrality. God, as the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer, must be honored. *To ignore God is to ignore the only possible basis for accurately comprehending the world*. This is Paul's challenge to every doctrine of common-ground knowledge. To ignore God's revelation of Himself in the Bible is also

21. The title of a book by the anarchist, Robert Lefevre.

22. R. H. Coase, "The Problem of Social Cost," *Journal of Law and Economics*, III (1960), pp. 1–44.

23. Gary North, *The Coase Theorem: A Study in Epistemology* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992). See also North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 3, *Tools of Dominion* (1990), Appendix H.

24. Fred R. Shapiro, "The Most Cited Law Review Articles Revisited," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* (1996), p. 751.

25. Gary North, "Undermining Property Rights: Coase and Becker," *The Journal of Libertarian Studies*, XVI (Fall 2002), pp. 90–97.

26. Gary North, *Inherit the Earth* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987), ch. 1.

to ignore the only possible basis for accurately comprehending the world. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, th[o]roughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16–17).

This is the philosophical basis for the reconstruction of all academic disciplines in terms of the Bible. This is also the philosophical basis for reconstructing all institutions in terms of the Bible. *There is no neutrality*. It is not sufficient for Christians to affirm this slogan. Christians should not expect to beat something with nothing. If there is no neutrality, then there must be biblically sanctioned alternatives to the present cross-denying world order. It is the task of Christians to search for these alternatives and defend them whenever they are discovered. It is also their task to seek to implement them.

In the field of economic theory, Christian economists should begin with an affirmation of God's ownership of the creation. They should then consider in detail God's delegation of authority to men to serve as His stewards. Then they should discuss the laws of economics as God-imposed laws. Then they should discuss economic cause and effect in terms of God's law. Finally, they should discuss long-term economic growth in terms of corporate and individual covenant-keeping and covenant-breaking. Covenant-keepers will inherit the earth. Christian economics should explain why.

3

FINAL JUDGMENT AND KINGDOM CONTINUITY

> *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*
>
> I CORINTHIANS 3:10–15

The theocentric issue here is the final judgment: point four of the biblical covenant.[1] Christ is the foundation of the covenant-keeper's life, as well as the work of the kingdom. Final judgment is his motivation. The end-point historically should be the Christian's starting-point motivationally.

A. How Firm a Foundation

Paul begins this section with a warning to the church. The church had divided into factions. Each faction's members professed personal commitment to a founder. The two mentioned were Paul and Apollos (v. 4). Paul derides this divisiveness by calling attention to God as the One who brings men's work to fruition. "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (v. 7). Nevertheless, Paul goes on to say that he did lay

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 4.

a foundation in Corinth. It was by the grace of God that he was able to do this, but he did lay it. He did not finish it. Others have added to his work. This points to the division of labor within the church, a theme he returns to in chapter 12.[2] He is talking about the church as a corporate entity.

Paul then adds a warning. "But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." Paul had done his work in laying a foundation at Corinth. Others must now follow his example. They must add to the beginning that he has made. They must consider carefully what they are doing. This is a call to kingdom productivity. The context is the church planted in Corinth by Paul and Apollos. The general principle here is God's call to men to work on God's behalf. Men are responsible before God to perform effectively.

Paul in this epistle so far has led his readers through a discussion of two kinds of foolishness and another discussion of two kinds of minds. A covenant-keeper possesses the mind of Christ (I Cor. 2:16). He can perceive the world around him analogously to the way that Christ views it. He is spiritual. He can make accurate judgments as a representative of Christ. Now Paul tells his listeners that they have a responsibility to extend Paul's original efforts. This has to mean work in building up the local church.

Paul speaks of laying a foundation. He has laid one in Corinth. What is its nature? "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (v. 11). *Christ is the foundation*. Each covenant-keeper is told to build on this foundation. No man can lay such a foundation on his own. This foundation is provided by God's grace. Once in place, covenant-keepers should build upon it. So, when Paul says that he laid a foundation, he is not saying that he laid it independently of Christ. *Christ lays the initial foundation*. When Paul speaks of his work in laying a foundation, he means his early work in church planting. But this work was possible only because Paul had stood on Christ's foundation when he laid the one in Corinth.

Constructing a foundation in Corinth was merely an extension of the sacrificial work that Christ had performed on the cross. The cross is a continuing theme in First Corinthians. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). First, there was the crucifixion; then there was the resurrection. "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are

2. Chapter 13.

perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Cor. 15:17–20).

For a man coming into this work in Corinth, because Paul had finished laying the foundation, his work would extend Paul's, which had extended Christ's. *Paul is speaking of progress through time*. There is a visible extension of Christ's kingdom. The person following Paul should look back at Paul's efforts and then further back to Christ's. His work has meaning because it rests on a foundation originally laid by Christ, not by Paul. It is God who gives the increase. Christ had laid the foundation through His representatives. Paul is saying that God gets all the glory. God's son laid the foundation, and then God then gave the increase. Paul's work was part of that increase. But the Corinthians were dividing in the name of human founders. This is wrong, Paul says. Forget about the human founders. Look back to Christ's work on the cross and to God as the supplier of all success.

He tells those who are building up the congregation, or who will soon join in this effort, to pay attention to the quality of their work. They will build upon a foundation laid by Paul. "I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon" (v. 10b). He has just dismissed the importance of his own work, yet here he calls them to take care in building on his work. How can we reconcile this seeming dualism?

Paul sees himself as an extension of Christ—not of Christ's being, but of His work. Paul sees himself as an appendage to Christ. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Through the cross of Christ, Paul has become the embodiment of Christ. He does not mean embodiment by incarnation; he means *embodiment by representation*. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you" (I Cor. 11:1–2).[3] Paul tells them to take great care in their work. Paul wants them to work well. They should do as he had done. They should build on Christ's foundation. They should become extensions of Christ by building on His foundation, just as Paul was an extension of Christ.

This view of covenant-keepers' labor validates good work. Paul tells them to be sure they consider their work carefully. They have

3. Chapter 12.

received grace in being allowed to build upon what Christ had laid at Calvary and what Paul had built in Corinth. They were participating in building the kingdom of God. Their work was a visible manifestation of God's kingdom. They were supposed to take care in doing the right work and doing it well.

B. Final Judgment and Continuity

Paul moves from the past—laying Christ's foundation—to the future. "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (vv. 12–13). There are differences in the quality of construction. Some construction is much better than others. Some has high value. Some has low value. Some has no value.

Paul's warning here makes it inescapably clear that there is continuity between a person's work in this world and his rewards in the world to come. Men lay personal foundations in this life. They reap appropriate rewards in the next life. There are distinctions of performance in this life. There will also be distinctions of rewards in the coming life. God notes the quality of each man's performance in history and will reward him accordingly on the day of judgment.

The way in which rewards will be collected is significant. Our works will be tried by fire. This means that they are tried by God's standards. The sanction is fire. This is not hellfire. It does not refer to the lake of fire. It refers to God's judgment of a person's temporal works, not his immortal soul. "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (v. 15). This is the fire of judicial purgation. It burns off impurities. In metallurgy, the fire burns off the base metals.

The fire of God's final judgment will test the quality of each man's work. This idea is a New Testament application of the Old Covenant's doctrine of God's historical judgment. Paul applies it to final judgment, a doctrine which was not clearly stated in the Old Covenant. In both cases, the imagery of the smelter appears.

> The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times (Ps. 12:6).

> Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: And I

> will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin (Isa. 1:24–25).
>
> The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away (Jer. 6:29).
>
> Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people? (Jer. 9:7)

Paul warns against the combustible trio of wood, hay, and stubble. After they are burned, nothing remains. A life of wood, hay, and stubble is worth living, but just barely. Their exclusive presence means that a God-fearing man has frittered away his life. He will escape the horrors of God's eternal fire (Rev. 20:15), but he will bring nothing with him into the world beyond. Passing through the judicial fire of final judgment will strip him of his legacy, his inheritance. This warning is consistent with Jesus' warning against laying up treasure in this world, and laying it up for the next world (Matt. 6:19–20).[4]

This passage refutes the doctrine that "you can't take it with you." Jesus and Paul taught clearly that you can take it with you if you send it ahead in advance. We can surrender insecure ownership of assets that possess high value in this world in order to gain secure ownership of assets with permanently high value in heaven and (presumably) after the resurrection. Assets that possess value exclusively in this world are represented by Paul's trio of wood, hay, and stubble. Christ called them treasures that moth corrupts and thieves break in and steal (Matt. 6:20). Their present value is high, but only because natural men's time horizons are too short. Natural men do not see the personal value of assets collected beyond the grave. Economically speaking, they discount the infinity of eternity by a rate of interest that approaches infinity as a limit. They impute very low or no value to eternity. Paul calls on the Corinthians to abandon the mind of natural man and exercise the mind of Christ.

The phrase, "you can't take it with you," is based on the natural man's short-sighted view of the future. What natural men possess in history they regard as bounded by death. This assumption is incorrect. This false assumption can lead to a false conclusion: "Consume it all before you die." This is the outlook of the squanderer. The prodigal son of the parable is the best-known New Testament example

4. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 13.

(Luke 15).[5] But an earth-bound time horizon can also lead to another conclusion: "Lay up treasure before you die." Men seek a false immortality by the fame of their reputations as rich or powerful. Christ's parable of the rich man who planned to build storage barns is representative of the asset-accumulator. "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:19–21).[6] Both attitudes are symptoms of the same short time horizon. The first man risks running out of wealth before he runs out of time. The second man risks running out of time before he runs out of wealth. Both men have misunderstood the recommended exchange of assets: temporal for eternal.

Paul is as emphatic as Jesus: you *can* take it with you. We need to understand this asset-exchange program. Jesus called on His followers to help the helpless. A person with many assets should voluntarily use them to help those people with few assets. Paul here calls on his readers to consider carefully the use of their time and any other assets they possess. He warns them to consider carefully what kind of work they will perform in history. Will it be of the asset-transfer variety—silver, gold, jewels—which of course are not literally silver, gold, and jewels? One surrenders literal silver, gold, and jewels in this life to fund good projects, in order to collect non-literal silver, gold, and jewels beyond the grave. Literal silver, gold, and jewels that are kept in storage for use exclusively in this life will be transformed retroactively into wood, hay, and stubble at the final judgment. We could say that God's retroactive imputation of value to each Christian's work will reduce the value of literal silver, gold, and jewels to that of literal wood, hay, and stubble.

Paul is speaking of assets hoarded for their own sake. He is not speaking of capital that is accumulated in order to generate income for kingdom projects. He is not saying, for example, that Christians or churches or ministries should not open bank accounts. He is not criticizing thrift. He is not saying that capital which covenant-keepers accumulate should be sold to covenant-breakers, thereby transferring to God's enemies the tools of production. Paul is saying only what Jesus said: if the temporal goal of the Christian capitalist is the multi-

5. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 37.

6. *Ibid*., ch. 25.

plication of capital for its own sake, and for the sake of his own fame, then he is trapped in the worship of mammon. He has substituted the worship of the created for the worship of the Creator.

Paul uses wood, hay, and stubble as images that represent all forms of temporal advantage. The pursuit of anything temporal for its own sake constitutes the accumulation of a form of wealth that will not survive the judicial fire of final judgment. Such wealth does not possess post-historical continuity. Its continuity is strictly temporal. The Bible testifies against everything that is strictly temporal.

C. Imagination and Judgment

Paul is trying to persuade his readers to take care in assessing the present value of the world beyond the grave. He is also telling them to assess the future value of their present assets. He is asking them to imagine the final judgment. From the vantage point of the final judgment, he tells them, look back at the work you are doing today in terms of how God will assess its value retroactively. Impute economic value to your efforts, but impute it in terms of God's retroactive judgment. Use the mental image of the last judgment to enable yourself to see things God's way today.

Paul is saying that covenant-keepers have the ability to think God's thoughts after Him. They can use their imaginations regarding the final judgment to help them in making better judgments in the present. Paul says that they can imagine the last judgment. Jesus told His followers the same thing (Matt. 25:31–46). This ability should become a source of Christians' knowledge of God's present assessment of their efforts.

Paul has already told them that covenant-keepers possess the mind of Christ. This announcement was preparatory to his discussion of final judgment. Because they possess the mind of Christ, covenant-keepers possess the ability to assess accurately the value of their efforts in building up God's kingdom. They can do this through an act of future-oriented imagination: passing retroactive judgment on their present actions. They impute value in the present because they can imagine God's retroactive imputation of value at the final judgment. They work from an imaginative future to assess the present. So does the covenant-breaker, who also imagines the outcome of his actions. The difference is, the Christian can imagine a post-historical retroactive imputation. This ability does not come naturally. It comes supernaturally. The natural man does not receive the things of the spirit.

Because covenant-keepers have been provided with information about God's final judgment—sanctions—they should search their Bibles for information regarding the standards that will be used by God to impose those future sanctions. This means that they must learn the specifics of the commandments.

> And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments (I John 2:3).
>
> He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (I John 2:4).
>
> And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight (I John 3:22).
>
> And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us (I John 3:24).
>
> By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments (I John 5:2).
>
> For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous (I John 5:3).
>
> And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it (II John 1:6).

The obvious question is this: Where do we find these commandments? In the New Testament only, or in the Old Testament, too? This is the debate over theonomy.[7] There are comparatively few commandments in the New Testament, and I can think of only four that are aimed at magistrates in civil government. These mandate the honest carrying out of a magistrate's assignment, not the content of the civil law. These rules were provided by John the Baptist, not Jesus (Luke 3:12–14).[8] So, if the righteous goal of both the citizen and the civil magistrate is to obey God's commandments, then God's laws governing civil government must be available somewhere. They are: in the Old Testament.

---

7. Gary North (ed.), *Theonomy: An Informed Response* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991). Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, 3rd ed. (Nacogdoches, Texas: Covenant Media Foundation, 2002); Bahnsen, *By This Standard: The Authority of God's Law Today* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985). Bahnsen, *No Other Standard* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991).

8. North, *Treasure and Dominion*, ch. 2.

D. The Continuity of Expansion

Paul tells his readers that they must pay attention to their work, which extends the work of Paul and Christ. Then he tells them to pay attention to the final judgment. Some of their work will not survive the application of God's purifying judicial fire. They may have meant well, but good intentions are not enough. There must be conformity between what covenant-keepers do in life and what God wants each of them to do. The question is: What has God predestinated each person to do? Elsewhere, Paul wrote: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8–10). The Greek word translated here as "before ordained" appears in only one other place in the New Testament: "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had **afore prepared** unto glory" (Rom. 9:22–23). It means "prepare before." God has laid out our paths. We must walk in them. "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Prov. 21:1).

Thus, *Christians' efforts are not random*. They are part of a plan in which every fact fits together. Paul says to consider carefully our work. This work is not strictly personal. It is part of a long-term program of kingdom-building. The foundation has been laid by Christ at Calvary. Now it is each covenant-keeper's task to build upon this foundation. These efforts are part of God's verbal decree. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). He spoke the universe into existence (Gen. 1). Now, he speaks His kingdom into existence by way of covenant-keepers.

There is kingdom continuity through the ages. God has decreed what will come to pass. He has decreed the good works that His people will perform. He has given them His law. Paul reminds them that they must take heed how they build on a foundation laid by others. Each person is fully responsible for his own efforts. God coordinates these efforts in order to build His kingdom. There is continuity through the ages.

The end of this phase of the construction process is the final judgment. There will be continuity beyond the final judgment. God will reward His servants in terms of the value of their efforts. There will be distinctions of rewards. This should serve as a major motivation for covenant-keepers to take care in their work. What they do in history will have implications beyond the grave.

Conclusion

The Bible does not indicate what men will do with their rewards in the post-judgment New Heavens and New Earth (Rev. 21; 22). There will be an inheritance. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:7). We are not told what this inheritance will be. Paul teaches that there will be rewards, and that these rewards will be significant as indications of the value to God of each person's work in history. We are told that it is better to receive rewards than not receive them, but we are not told anywhere in the Bible what people will do with them after the final separation of the sheep from the goats (Matt. 25:31–46). We are not told whether a man's rewards will serve as a his initial capital base in the resurrection world, or whether they will serve only as medals of honor. There will be treasures in heaven based on what men have done in history. "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:20).[9] We are not told what we will do with these heavenly treasures. There is continuity from this life into heaven. There is also continuity from this life into final judgment. We are not told the nature of the continuity beyond the final judgment, only that there will be an inheritance.

Paul's injunction to pay attention to one's work is part of his overall message to the Corinthians. He tells his readers that their work has value today, but this value is imputed by God. They should look into the future, to the day of final judgment, and then consider retroactively God's judgment on their life's efforts. This should aid them in assessing their callings before God.

What covenant-keepers do in each era of history will have consequences for later eras. It will also have consequences in eternity, both individually and corporately for the church. Paul reminds them that what Christ did at Calvary has laid the foundation. No other

9. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 13.

foundation can any man lay better than this one. Needless to say, the proof of the superiority of this foundation will not be the failure of the church in history to complete its task. God predestined the cross. "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22). He has long ago predestined each covenant-keeper's good works: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). He has not predestinated cultural defeat for His kingdom in history.

4

DEFINITIVE DELEGATED OWNERSHIP

> *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*
>
> I CORINTHIANS 3:19–23

The theocentric principle here is God's ownership of the world. This is based on His absolute sovereignty over the world.[1]

A. Conflict Over Ownership

Paul in this section of the epistle presents two worldviews. One is biblical; the other is anti-biblical. In the eyes of each group, the other's outlook is foolish. There can be no reconciliation between these two views. They are based on rival presuppositions regarding the world.

Paul says that God regards the wisdom of this world as foolish. The Greek word for "world" is *kosmos*. A few verses later, Paul says that "For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the **world**, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." The same work appears: *kosmos*. So, there is a conflict between the wisdom of this world and the owner of this world. The owner regards as foolish the wisdom of those who are described as "the world."

1. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1982] 2012), ch. 1.

1. Rival Claims

This conflict is covenantal. There are rival claimants for ownership. Those who are members of the kingdom of Satan assert ownership rights to the world. Paul speaks of them here as the world. The Christians in Paul's day were few in number. Yet Paul says here that they possessed title to this world. How can this be? On what basis could Paul have made such a claim?

Satan gained control in history be deceiving Eve and successfully tempting Adam (I Tim. 2:13). Adam had been the delegated owner of the world (Gen. 1:26–28).[2] He was God's covenantal agent. But when he challenged God's law, he did so as an agent of Satan. He listened to his wife, who had listened to the serpent, who was Satan's delegated agent. By accepting Satan's interpretation of the forbidden fruit, Adam transferred his *covenantal allegiance* from God to Satan. This has always been the basis of Satan's ownership claims in history. But he holds title only as a squatter. Adam forfeited his title and therefore also the lawful inheritance of mankind by rebelling against God. Only because of God's grace to Adam and to mankind in general (Gen. 3:15) has covenant-breaking mankind, and therefore Satan, retained operational control over most of the world.

Paul writes in this epistle about Christ's resurrection. Christ, he tells the Corinthians, is the last Adam. "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit" (I Cor. 15:45). The literal, bodily resurrection of the last Adam is the basis of our faith, Paul says. If Christ was not resurrected, our faith is in vain (I Cor. 15:14, 19).

Because of Calvary, Christ has re-established ownership claims over the world. In His post-resurrection instruction of His disciples, Christ announced this: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18b). Given by whom? Here, Paul makes it clear: God the Father. Christ belongs to God. He is the last Adam. Christ representatively re-established redeemed mankind's covenantal allegiance to God the Father. He has therefore restored the pre-Fall hierarchical system of ownership: God > covenant-keeping man > world. God the Father has identified Christ as His *delegated agent* in history. Christ, by His literal bodily resurrection, publicly demonstrated this restoration of the pre-Fall hierarchy. Christians belong to Christ through adoption (John 1:12). In the same way that God has delegated ownership

2. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, chaps. 3, 4.

of this world to Christ, Christ has delegated ownership of this world to His people.

2. Victory Over Death

In this passage, Paul tells the Corinthians that they are possessors of all things. This includes death. This is a strange concept. How do Christians own death? Through Christ, who now controls death. "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:17–18). Death serves God's purposes, and therefore the purposes of covenant-keepers, by cutting short the work of covenant-breakers, but extending the work of His people through covenantal continuity.

Death is the great enemy of man. Death is the curse that God placed on Adam in the garden, as promised. Death, Paul writes later in this epistle, is the last enemy. Death will be finally overcome after Christ has brought all things visibly under His authority.

> For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all (I Cor. 15:22–28).[3]

Paul's words here say specifically, "For he hath put all things under his feet" (v. 27a). This has already taken place, as Christ told the disciples. Yet it is obvious that death is not yet subdued. So, there is a distinction between what has been done, what is the case now, and what will be done. Theologians assign this description whenever they encounter such a past-present-future condition: *definitive, progressive, final*. It describes personal sanctification. It also describes the kingdom of God.

God has put all things under Christ's feet, yet some things remain to be put under Christ's feet. What can this mean? God definitively

3. Chapter 16.

placed all things under Christ's authority immediately after the resurrection. Christ announced this to the disciples. He achieved a visible victory over death by His resurrection. This is the key fact of Christianity, Paul writes in chapter 15, without which Christians' faith would be in vain. *This victory was definitive*. It was a visible victory that in principle marked the defeat of God's curse in history. Christ, as the last Adam, publicly reversed God's curse on heirs of the first Adam. Yet death still operates. What was definitive with Christ has not yet been made final by Christ. It will be, Paul insists, but this will mark the culmination of history.

The judgment of God on Adam has been definitively removed, Paul says. It will be finally removed. What about in between? Isaiah said that death's curse will be progressively removed.

> For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them (Isa. 65:17–21).[4]

Mankind's long life spans during the pre-Mosaic era will be restored. Death will still operate, but not as it does today. There will be an era of visible victory over death—incomplete, but statistically significant. (One economic manifestation of this change will be a reduction of life insurance premiums.)

So, there are three phases of Christ's victory over death: definitive (I Cor. 15:12), progressive (Isa. 65:20), and final (I Cor. 15:26). Paul encourages the Corinthians in their testimony, despite the fact that the world regards this testimony as foolish.

3. An Analogous Transfer of Ownership

Paul asserts Christ's definitive victory over death at Calvary. He also asserts Christ's final victory over death as the last enemy to be subdued. Isaiah announced covenant-keepers' progressive victory over death. It is in the context of his discussion of death that Paul

4. Gary North, *Restoration and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on the Prophets* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 15.

brings up the issue of cosmic ownership. He lists death as one of the things possessed by the Corinthians.

What does it mean, to *own* death? It means that death, as an aspect of the creation, is under the God-delegated authority of Christ, who has in turn delegated authority to His people. Life and death belong to the Corinthians, Paul says. So does the present and the future. All things are under their ownership. God owns Christ, Christ owns His people, and they own the world.

It was clear to the Corinthians that they did not run the affairs of Corinth. As Corinthians, they were under the judicial authority of Rome. Then in what way were they owners of the world? In the same way that they controlled death: definitively. They would die in history, but the resurrection was ahead for them. They possessed legal title to this *final resurrection unto life*. As covenant-keepers, they also possessed the progressive victory over death that had been prophesied by Isaiah. Through their covenantal heirs, they possessed this *progressive victory over death*. The same three-fold title to the world was also theirs. Definitively, title had officially passed at the resurrection from God to the last Adam, Christ. Progressively, it is the task of Christians to redeem the world—buy it back from covenant-breakers—as lawful agents of God. Finally, covenant-keepers will inherit.

> For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth (Ps. 37:9).
>
> But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace (Ps. 37:11).
>
> Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5).

The meek before God will exercise dominion finally. They already exercise it definitively. The debate today is over the exercise of dominion progressively.

B. Progressive Redemption

Elsewhere, I have written about Christ's comprehensive redemption of the world.[5] Wherever sin reigns in history, there we find an area of life fit for redemption. The word "redeem" means "buy back." Christ bought back the world at Calvary, not from Satan, but from God the Father. Adam in his sin had surrendered ownership back to God, the

5. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), Appendix C.

original Owner, on behalf of mankind. It is a mistake to conclude that Satan lawfully received the transfer of delegated ownership. Adam did not possess the authority to make such a transfer. Satan is therefore a squatter on stolen land.

Adam broke the terms of the lease. He was judicially therefore disinherited by God. Only on the basis of God's grace to Adam could mankind continue to fulfill the dominion covenant (Gen. 1:26–28). God looked forward to Christ's work at Calvary as the basis of grace for Adam and his heirs, whether special grace (soul-saving) or common grace (culture-continuing).[6]

The definitive repurchase of the world on behalf of covenant-keeping mankind took place at Calvary. This transfer of ownership to covenant-keeping mankind will be manifested for all to see on judgment day. But what about history? How is this cosmic redemption to be manifested?

Christ came as a servant. He made it clear that His disciples are to continue His work of service. "But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42–45). The progressive redemption of the world is to be achieved through faithful service to men in the name of God. Paul fully understood this. He told the Roman church, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Rom. 12:19–20).[7] He was quoting Proverbs. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee" (Prov. 25:21–22).[8]

Service to covenant-breakers imposes God's positive sanctions—

6. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

7. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 10.

8. Gary North, *Wisdom and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Proverbs*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 76.

economic success or grudging acceptance—as well as negative sanctions on covenant-breakers: coals of fire. *The principle of service is also the heart of free market economic theory and practice. Producers serve customers*. When they are successful, they earn income. Christians are supposed to be good stewards of God's resources by imitating Christ in His office as a servant. They are to buy back the world in a way analogous to Christ's purchase of redemption on their behalf. They extend the kingdom of God in history by serving others, by preaching the gospel, and by becoming more competent producers.

In every realm of life, Christians are supposed to strive to be better performers than covenant-breakers. They represent the Redeemer of the world. They should therefore be superior performers. Paul later tells the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). The Greek word for "followers" means "imitators" or "mimics." Paul represented Christ; they are to mimic him. He served; they must also serve. They will extend God's kingdom in history, just as Paul did. It is Christ's kingdom because He is owned by God, and His followers are owned by Him. "And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:23).

Christians buy back the world ***progressively*** *because Christ has bought it back* ***definitively***. They can do this as representative agents of Christ because they belong to Christ, just as Christ belongs to God. There is a hierarchy of ownership: from God the Father to Jesus Christ, as the last Adam, to His followers. The definitive ownership of the world is Christ's, by way of Calvary. The definitive ownership of the world is Christians', by way of their definitive redemption by God's imputation of Christ's perfection to them.

C. Eschatology and Economics

Eschatology affects how Christians view the future, both progressively and finally. Each eschatological interpretation has implications for social theory. Each has implications for economic theory.

The amillennialist denies that Isaiah's prophecy should be taken literally. Somehow, the passage does not really prophesy the extension of mankind's life spans. Amillennialist theologian Anthony Hoekema took this approach.[9] All the others implicitly do, if they even acknowledge the text's existence. There will supposedly be no progressive extension of Christ's definitive victory over death. There

9. Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 202.

will be a final victory over death, but not a progressive victory that is tied to the extension of God's kingdom in history. This implies that the progressive extension of God's kingdom in history will not affect either society or economy in any long-term sense. So, the amillennialist concludes, Paul's assertion of a link between death and ownership in this passage has no literal implications for history.

Premillennialists make the same assumptions that amillennialists do with respect to the era of the church prior to Christ's bodily return to establish a millennial kingdom in person. A premillennialist would admit that Paul's statement here is valid with respect to definitive death and ownership, but the historical application of both the death and ownership principles must await a discontinuous future event, namely, the bodily return of Christ. Any significant progressive manifestations of Christ's definitive victory over death or His definitive ownership in history must await the establishment of His millennial reign, which will not be delegated from heaven but rather from some earthly headquarters. While Satan's disciples are acknowledged by premillennialists as reigning visibly in history without the physical presence of Satan, premillennialists deny Christians the same degree of authority in history. Christians will supposedly never reign visibly in history apart from Christ's physical presence.

The postmillennialist argues differently. He teaches that the progressive manifestations of Christ's definitive victory at Calvary will take place in history, even though Christ will remain at His Father's side in heaven. God's system of *delegated ownership*—from Christ to His people—will be progressively manifested in history despite His bodily absence. The ascension of Christ to the right hand of God has empowered Christians through the sending of the Holy Spirit. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26). Christ's return in final judgment will come only after God has visibly put all things under His feet, Paul says in chapter 15. The means of this extension of Christ's visible ownership in history must come through *progressive redemption*: Christians' buying back of the world progressively from covenant-breakers as proof of their faithful stewardship as adopted sons.[10]

10. On the relation between eschatology and social theory, see my book, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

Conclusion

Paul here teaches that everything in the world belongs to Christians because everything belongs to Christ. But what is definitive is not yet final. Between Christ's definitive victory over death and sin at Calvary and the final judgment of the world must come the progressive redemption of the world by Christ's covenantal representatives. *They must buy back the world progressively on His behalf because He has bought it back definitively on their behalf*. He has definitively validated God's gracious extension of the dominion covenant to mankind after Adam's rebellion. The dominion covenant has been definitively established by God with the second Adam, Jesus Christ, and through Him with covenant-keepers.

Satan still occupies most of the world as an illegal squatter. He occupies through his covenantal agents, just as he did before Calvary. He does not occupy a physical throne in history. Neither does Jesus Christ. The covenantal competition for ownership of the world takes place in history through representatives of rival original claimants, both of whom are supernatural and beyond history. Legal title is now held by Jesus Christ, Paul says, and by His covenantal representatives through Christ. This fact will be made manifest to everyone on judgment day, but it will become progressively visible even before, as Isaiah taught regarding death (Isa. 65:17–20).

The comprehensive repurchase of the world by covenant-keepers must come about through their faithful, law-abiding service to God through their efficient service to men. This progressive, comprehensive redemption of the world is denied by amillennialists and, with respect to the era prior to Christ's bodily return to set up an earthly kingdom, by premillennialists. Both groups admit that this redemption was definitively achieved by Christ at Calvary. They also admit that it will be finally achieved at the day of judgment. Amillennialists deny that it will be progressively achieved by Christ's covenantal agents in history. Premillennialists deny that it will be done before Christ's bodily return. Both groups believe that economic capital that is devoted to the redemption of anything except souls, Christian families, churches, and skid-row rescue missions is wasted in this, the church age. They think that efforts to redeem society as a whole are the equivalent of polishing brass on a sinking ship, as dispensationalist radio pastor J. Vernon McGee once put it. When this pessimistic vision of the earthly future is widely shared, Christians rarely have the motivation to strive for a lifetime in the hope of becoming the most

accomplished servants in every area of life. This retards the fulfilment of the dominion covenant. In this sense, it delays the return of Christ in final judgment. Typical of this outlook are the words on the penultimate page in Hal Lindsey's best-selling book, *The Late, Great Planet Earth* (1970), which sold some 35 million copies and set the tone for fundamentalism in the final decades of the twentieth century. He told his readers, "We shouldn't drop out of school or worthwhile community activities, or stop working, or rush marriage, or any such thing unless Christ clearly leads us to do so."[11] This is the closest thing to a call for Christian social action that appears in the book: do not drop out unless Christ tells you to. This is not what I regard as a stirring exhortation to engage in world transformation for Christ.

11. Hal Lindsey, *The Late, Great Planet Earth* (New York: Bantam, [1970] 1977), p. 176 It is one of those delightful oddities that Bantam Books is located at **666** Fifth Avenue.

5

PROGRESSIVE KNOWLEDGE, PROGRESSIVE RESPONSIBILITY

> *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.*
>
> I CORINTHIANS 4:1–5

The theocentric focus here is God as the judge who judges in history and will judge retroactively at the end of time. Judgment is point four of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. Stewardship and Judgment

Paul speaks of himself both as a minister of Christ and as a steward of the mysteries of God (v. 1). By this, he means that he is an apostle. The plural, "us," refers to the other apostles. Apostles possessed special knowledge of the future. Paul possessed such knowledge. Later in this epistle, he writes: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (I Cor. 15:51). He also possessed special knowledge of the present: the great mystery that prophets of old had sought to discover, but could not. This was the

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 4.

mystery of the church as incorporating the gentiles. Gentiles would be made equal to Jews inside the church.

> How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:3–10).

1. Responsibility

To possess any gift from God is to be made responsible before God for its proper use. "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (v. 2). A steward is someone who takes responsibility for property owned by someone else (Matt. 21:33–43;[2] 25:14–30;[3] Luke 12:42–48;[4] 19:12–27[5]). He acts as the lawfully delegated agent of the owner. A righteous steward is not supposed to act on his own behalf directly (Luke 16:1–12).[6] He is supposed to act on his own behalf indirectly by faithfully managing whatever has been put in trust with him by the owner. In doing so, he can maximize his return on his investment of time by maximizing the owner's economic return on his investment of capital (Matt. 25:21, 23;[7] Luke 19:17, 19[8]). Both the owner and the steward can maximize their return when the steward is faithful because he trusts the owner to be a fair judge of performance, and the owner turns out to be a reliable judge. But the profitability of the mutual arrangement becomes visible only at the end of a time period. In the case of Jesus' parables on stewardship,

2. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 43.
3. *Ibid.*, ch. 47.
4. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 28.
5. *Ibid.*, ch. 46.
6. *Ibid.*, ch. 38.
7. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 47.
8. North, *Treasure and Dominion*, ch. 46.

the steward is not told by the owner how long this time period will be. Jesus concluded the parable of the ten virgins with this eschatological warning: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 25:13).

An apostle, however, was in a special situation. He possessed continuing revelation from God regarding his performance. He did not have to wait until the final judgment to be given such knowledge. This was why Paul was not concerned about critics in the Corinthian church who were followers of Apollos or anyone else. "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self" (v. 3). This was because he was in close contact with God, who revealed Himself to Paul. "For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord" (v. 4). Paul's self-knowledge was not sufficient to justify him, but God's day-by-day judgment was. The Corinthian church could not validate this assertion, but this did not concern Paul. The fact that his letter has survived as part of the canon of Scripture is sufficient evidence that Paul's knowledge of God's judgment of his performance was accurate. He was under a greater Judge than the church of Corinth.

He says that it is not given to men to make final pronouncements. This is because God alone is omniscient. God will reveal the truth of all things at the last day. Until then, a man can be certain that his knowledge is not the equivalent of God's. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (v. 5). Man's knowledge is at best analogous to God's. But an apostle's knowledge was superior to any common man's knowledge. Later in this epistle, Paul provides detailed information about the final judgment (I Cor. 15).[9]

2. Provisional Judgment

So, what does he mean when he tells them not to judge anything before the time? What about rendering ecclesiastical judgment in God's name? This is mandatory. Jesus said:

> Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching

9. Chapter 15.

> any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:18–20).

We must draw inferences from what Paul has already written. He says here that he is justified by God, meaning that God has judged Paul as at least "satisfactory" in the performance of the duties of his office. Paul knows this from God. Paul also possesses knowledge of certain mysteries. He has made it clear that he is in a special position as a minister because of what he knows. The Corinthian church is not in a position to judge him. Then he warns them not to make final pronouncements. God later "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness" (v. 5).

These brief sentences convey the following. First, a steward of God is responsible to God for what he knows and does. Second, God judges every person's knowledge, day by day, just as He judged Paul's. Third, final knowledge is not given to anyone—final in the sense of knowledge that is equivalent to what God will reveal to men at the final judgment. This indicates that *God's judgment is a continual process through time*. God knows the knowledge that every man has, and He judges a man's use of this knowledge day by day, moment by moment. He had judged Paul, and He judged the members of the Corinthian church. This assessment goes on continually.

3. Stewardship

What should Paul's readers learn from this passage regarding their stewardship? First, they had been given knowledge of some mysteries of God, for Paul had revealed them. Second, they were responsible for the proper administration of this unique knowledge. They had to do something productive with this knowledge. They were not to let themselves be paralyzed just because they did not have complete knowledge equivalent to what God will reveal at the last day. Third, they had misused their knowledge. They had split the congregation with needless wrangling.

Paul criticizes divisions that were based on their individual preferences for various church leaders. He uses sarcastic language to describe the foolishness of what they have done. "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised" (vv. 8–10). He contrasts their inaccurate self-judgment with God's judgment of them. Paul calls them rich. Compared to the life of poverty that Paul was living, this was economically correct. But their riches were of the wrong kind. He also calls them wise. They were wise as the world is wise, i.e., foolish.

They had misunderstood what their task was. It was not to create factions based on personalities or the knowledge imparted to them by these personalities. Whatever knowledge they possessed had been a gift to them from God by way of church builders. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (I Cor. 4:7). He is charging them with being poor stewards of the knowledge which they had received as a free gift from God. They were misusing this gift.

B. Misusing Accurate Information

Their poor stewardship was the result of their poor use of the good knowledge that they had received. Paul was not saying that their knowledge was inaccurate. On the contrary, they had been given accurate knowledge. This was what made them responsible to God. They had failed to apply the knowledge that they had received. They had made a mistake by dividing the church into rival groups based on its multiple founders.

The misuse of knowledge is different from not having enough knowledge. Paul warns them against trying to penetrate the affairs of this world as if they had access to future perfect knowledge. They were unable to look forward and see the panorama of history in retrospect, as God will declare it on judgment day. But they were also told that they had been given access to mysteries. This put them in a better position to understand their times than someone who had not been given such information. They had greater responsibility because of this. They had misused the knowledge they had been given.

So, he warns them not to over-rate their abilities to judge the world, but, at the same time, they also must not ignore the knowledge they had been given. They lived, just as we live, in a world that is like a looking glass. As he says later in this epistle, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (I Cor. 13:12).

Paul had superior knowledge of some things than the prophets of old had possessed. Knowledge had advanced considerably with the coming of the New Covenant. It had advanced even beyond what Jesus had announced. Jesus had told the disciples, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:5b–6). Then God told Peter to go to a gentile's house (Acts 10). This was followed by an unforeseen event. "And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 10:45). God told Paul to go to gentile nations. This was the great mystery. Gentiles were being incorporated into the church.

The point is, there had been an increase of knowledge over time. As men move closer to the final judgment, mankind's storehouse of information increases. Men are expected by God to possess greater insights into the workings of this world. Men cannot attain in history the equivalent of the knowledge that will be given by God on the last day, but they have been given access to more knowledge than men possessed in earlier days. Paul is speaking of progressive knowledge. *Knowledge increases over time, and so does responsibility*. The steward must do a better job as knowledge increases. Jesus taught this explicitly. "But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48).[10]

C. Dispersed Knowledge and Its Coordination

How can any person keep up with the flood of knowledge today? Each day, he has additional historical information to master. He has knowledge coming at him from a myriad of sources. God makes him responsible for faithfully acting in terms of this ever-growing flood of knowledge. How will this responsibility not overwhelm him?

Paul provides a preliminary basis of the answer in chapter 12, where he sketches the concept of the division of labor.[11] The church is a body made up of members. They work as a unit. This implies that each member has specialized knowledge that accompanies his specialized skills. He brings this knowledge into the church. It becomes available for others to use.

10. North, *Treasure and Dominion*, ch. 28.
11. Chapter 14.

1. Responsibility and Grace

Paul is telling the Corinthian church that their responsibility has increased, but their performance has been substandard. There is cause and effect in history. Greater responsibility arrives as time moves forward. As men get closer to the day of final judgment, they possess greater knowledge.

For an individual to deal successfully with this increase in responsibility requires an increase in God's grace. Without this, no one can legitimately hope to avoid God's negative assessment of his performance. The steward possesses more knowledge, greater responsibility, and no way to keep up on his own. If even a church cannot see into the future sufficiently clearly to make definitive assessments of its era, how can covenant-breakers do this? Common grace may increase for a period, but special grace is required in order for any society to continue to maintain common grace and thereby deal with the added responsibility that comes with increased knowledge. Sinners will eventually rebel against God at some point, despite their prosperity, thereby bringing on His negative historical sanctions.[12] Self-proclaimed autonomous man is foolish, according to Paul. He cannot possibly make maximum use of the knowledge provided to him by God through the social division of labor and historical progress. His responsibility as a steward before God (Gen. 1:26–28)[13] will overwhelm him.

Paul tells them that they cannot hope to attain the degree of knowledge about the present that God will use to judge the world on judgment day. This means that the quest for exhaustive knowledge is illegitimate. A man cannot become God. He can improve his knowledge, but this should never be regarded as a way to attain divine knowledge. The Creator-creature distinction cannot be overcome. God told Israel: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8–9). Transcendence is closed to man. He tried to gain it in the garden. This attempt brought him under negative sanctions.

12. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 6.

13. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), chaps. 3, 4.

2. The Free Market Coordinates Knowledge

This same principle of dispersed knowledge can be applied outside the church. Society is the functional equivalent of a storehouse of dispersed knowledge. It is also a kind of factory for the production of additional knowledge. Knowledge is dispersed among billions of economic decision-makers in their capacity as producers and customers. The question is: How best to mobilize this dispersed knowledge into a system that benefits more people?

F. A. Hayek emphasized the knowledge-coordinating aspect of the free market. He saw the free market as an institutional structure that rewards accurate knowledge of the future whenever an appropriate mobilization of resources accompanies this knowledge. He saw the free market as a means for coordinating individual plans. Competition on a free market is a process of discovery. The free market's system of profit and loss motivates producers and economic forecasters to put forth their best efforts in mobilizing scarce resources to serve future customers. It is not merely that producers seek to minimize the costs of production. They do apply their knowledge to the production process, but the production process has a goal: to serve customers in the future. The free market coordinates dispersed knowledge by rewarding successful entrepreneurs who serve specific customers most efficiently.[14]

Production for future customers is a form of stewardship. We might call it *horizontal stewardship*. Serving customers is a system of mutual exchange: horizontal service.[15] Legally, customers are not in a position to render formal judgment on producers. In their capacity as customers, they do not own any entrepreneur's resources. They do not occupy a superior position legally. Economically, however, they do occupy a superior position. They possess the most marketable resource: money. They are therefore in a better bargaining position than producers are, whose markets are narrow. As in Jesus' parables of stewardship, the success of a producer cannot be known until the customer judges among many producers, and then issues his judgment in the form of a purchase or a refusal to purchase. His judgment is retroactive on producers. The customer asks competing producers, "What have you done for me lately?"

14. F. A. Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), ch. 4.

15. North, *Hierarchy and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Timothy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), pp. 26, 30, 33.

When society's dispersed knowledge is put at the disposal of other individuals, both social and individual capital increase, for knowledge is a form of capital. It is not a free resource.[16] Through investment, knowledge can increase over time. When knowledge increases, the potential for increased output also increases. Producers can purchase access to this knowledge, and customers can purchase access to its results. Customers pay for the results of specialists' knowledge.

Conclusion

Paul reminds the Corinthian church about the burden of responsibility that they have as a result of the teachers who had come to them, men who had laid the foundation of the church, which is Christ crucified. The church's members are poor stewards because they are squabbling over which founder provided the foundational theology. Paul dismisses this factionalism. It is the foundation that is crucial, not its sources. This foundation is Christ. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11).

Paul sets forth a principle here: with greater knowledge comes greater responsibility. The quest for perfect knowledge—judgment-day knowledge—is illegitimate. It cannot be attained in history. But there is now and will continue to be greater knowledge over time. This will bring greater opportunities and greater responsibility. *This increasing burden of stewardship cannot be avoided*. What is then the covenant-keeper's hope? Greater grace, which increases responsibility, which leads to greater grace. Men are always in debt to God. *God's grace always races ahead of men's ability to match it with their performance*. Men always fall short of the mark. But Jesus Christ did not. His perfect humanity, imputed to us judicially by God's grace, is the only legitimate basis of any individual's hope. It is therefore also the only legitimate basis of society's hope.

16. Thomas Sowell, *Knowledge and Decisions* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

6

ESCHATOLOGY AND BIBLICAL THEOCRACY

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?

I CORINTHIANS 6:2–9

The theocentric focus here is the final judgment of God, when He will judge the entire world: point four of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. Ethics Above Power

Paul teaches here that Christians will be God's representative agents on that final day of judgment. We will judge the angels. This is the clearest passage in the Bible that places authority above power. Angels are more powerful than men are, but they possess less covenantal authority than Christians do. The implication that follows from this fact is that *ethics is more important than power*. The fundamental issues of life are ethical. Elsewhere, Paul wrote: "When For we wrestle not

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 4.

against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:12–13). The armor is not physical, but ethical. This is because the battle is not physical, but ethical.

B. Church Courts

The institutional church is to serve its members by offering justice to all. Paul says that it is wrong for church members to go before a civil court to seek judgments against each other. The question is: Why is this wrong? Paul begins the passage with a presupposition: covenant-keepers will render final judgment on the angels. This doctrine is taught nowhere else in Scripture. It means that *man is God's judicial representative*, not merely in history, but also in eternity. Angels possess more power and knowledge than men do in history, but this does not entitle them to the office of judge. *Man alone is made in God's image*. The essence of this image is the ability and authority to render final judgment. Covenant-keepers will be God's agents of final judgment on the angels because they possess the mind of Christ (I Cor. 2:16).[2]

Once covenant-keepers understand that they will judge the angels, Paul writes, they should not subordinate themselves to pagan civil courts. These courts are staffed by covenant-breakers. To subordinate oneself voluntarily to a pagan civil court in order to bring sanctions against another covenant-keeper is to affirm the legitimacy of the power that covenant-breakers and non-biblical law exercise over covenant-keepers and biblical law. Theirs is a false claim, Paul says, and the proof of this is that covenant-keepers will finally judge angels and the world.

Paul's argument begins with eschatology: the doctrine of the last things. He offers a prophecy regarding the final judgment. After God renders judgment against covenant-breakers, covenant-keepers will render judgment against the angels. Here is the sequence of events.

> And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life:

2. Chapter 2.

> and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–15).

Satan will be banished to the lake of fire before the judgment of resurrected mankind begins. "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). After God's removal of all covenant-breakers from the presence of covenant-keepers, the judgment of the angels will begin. Which angels will follow Satan into the lake of fire?

Paul is arguing against the authority of civil government in a pagan society to bring sanctions against covenant-keepers who obey God's law. But is he also arguing against civil government in general to exercise such authority? No. Here is the infraction: "But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers" (v. 6). The issue here is the presence in civil courts of unbelieving judges. In a biblical commonwealth, it is legitimate for Christians to appeal to civil government to settle explicitly civil conflicts. Paul is not arguing against civil government. He is surely not arguing against Christian civil government. He is arguing against voluntary submission to a pagan state by Christians in conflict.

C. The Cost of Common Grace-Based Justice

For every benefit, there is a cost—added responsibility, if nothing else (Luke 12:48).[3] For the benefit of Christians' maintaining their own courts, the cost is the unavailability of the monopoly of violence to enforce their claims against other Christians. In their disputes with fellow Christians, they cannot legitimately appeal to a pagan state, which Rome was.

This does not mean that Christians cannot legitimately appeal to a pagan state against covenant-breakers. Paul appealed to the emperor against a Jewish court. "For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto

3. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed.(Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 28.

them. I appeal unto Caesar" (Acts 25:11). This declaration affirmed the legitimacy of the death penalty, which was Rome's monopoly. This declaration also showed Paul's greater trust in the covenant-breaking Roman court system than in the supreme court of the Jewish religious leaders: the Sanhedrin. He knew the truth: Pontius Pilate had resisted crucifying Jesus, but the Jewish religious establishment had insisted. The Jews, who had been covenant-keepers in history, had now become less just than the pagan Roman emperor and his judicial agents. Why? Because the Jews had initiated the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. As Peter had warned them, but not the Romans, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole" (Acts 4:10). Rome had enforced the civil judgment of Pilate, but Peter said that God held the Jews responsible. As a nation, Old Covenant Israel had not heeded Peter's warning.

Paul says that it is better to suffer economic loss at the hands of a fellow covenant-keeper than to enter a Roman civil court in quest of justice. This assessment had to do with eschatology. Those who will be judged negatively by God on the final day should not be submitted to in history for the sake of gaining a favorable settlement against a fellow believer. Why not? Because such subordination in history testifies to a false eschatology: the final judgment of covenant-keepers by covenant-breakers.

Paul uses strong language: "Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" (v. 7b). The cost of avoiding dependence on a pagan state for justice is whatever the value of the forfeited property right is. The benefit is the avoidance of subordination to covenant-breakers, which would testify to a false eschatological future. The benefit outweighs the cost. Paul's assessment could not be clearer.

Paul goes beyond the economic category of suffering a loss. He warns against becoming an economic oppressor. "Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren" (v. 8). Why is seeking pagan civil justice a form of fraud? Because this act testifies to a false eschatological future: inheritance. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" (v. 9). This means that the kind of justice that is provided by a pagan civil court is injustice when compared to justice in a church court, even when the ecclesiastical judge is not educated. "If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to

this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church" (v. 4). He adds, "I speak to your shame" (v. 5a).

Paul is arguing that a system of justice that is provided by a civil court that operates in terms of God's common grace is inherently inferior to a church court that operates in terms of God's special grace. *A church court is a special-grace court*. So vast is the difference between the two sources of justice that going before a pagan civil court is comparable to seeking to defraud a fellow Christian.

The dividing issue is not "civil court vs. ecclesiastical court." The dividing issue is "pagan authority vs. Christian authority." Paul is quite clear about this. "But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers" (v. 6). "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" (v. 9a). His argument leads inescapably to a conclusion: *biblical theocracy is the proper basis of social and political order*. Paul is arguing that a society that relies on covenant-breaking civil judges and any concept of civil law other than biblical law has adopted anti-Christian rulership. Civil justice is substandard in such a society. Such a system of civil law testifies to a false eschatology in which covenant-breakers will impose final sanctions on covenant-keepers. Paul tells the church at Corinth that it is better to suffer economic loss than implicitly to admit such a view of justice by taking a brother before such a court.

Conclusion

This well-known passage has been interpreted to mean that church courts are morally superior to civil courts. This is not what Paul taught. He taught that *church* courts are morally superior to *pagan* civil courts. A pagan civil court allows a covenant-breaker to declare and then impose his court's concept of civil justice on covenant-keepers. This is its great offense, in Paul's opinion. Such a system of civil justice testifies to a false eschatology. Paul uses eschatology to impugn pagan civil courts.

To conclude that *every* civil court is inherently inferior morally to *any* church court is to conclude that the church is superior judicially to the state. This assumption moves legal theory toward judicial dualism: one legal order for covenant-breakers and another for covenant-keepers. This was Martin Luther's position.[4] It also promotes pietism's proposed downgrading of politics to the realm of *adia-*

4. Charles Trinkaus, "The Religious Foundations of Luther's Social Views," in John H. Mundy, *et. al.*, *Essays in Medieval Life* (New York: Biblo & Tannen, 1955), pp. 71–87.

phora—things indifferent for the Christian faith. Finally, this assumption implies that the gospel cannot redeem civil institutions. Calvinism opposed this conclusion until the Enlightenment era, beginning in the eighteenth century, when Protestants made an unofficial alliance with humanism to establish political polytheism.[5]

The Christian West previously had come to an agreement between the Pope and the emperor in 1076: both church and state possess legitimate claims to enforce the law in their respective jurisdictions. Both institutions rule officially in the name of God. This was the meaning of what legal historian Harold Berman has called the papal revolution of Western law.[6] In contrast, Eastern Orthodoxy has long tended toward Caesaropapism, with the church subordinate to the state. The split between Eastern Orthodoxy and Catholicism in 1054 made possible the Papal legal revolution, beginning two decades later, which in turn laid the foundation for the development of canon law, which paralleled and intermingled with a revived Roman civil law.[7]

To elevate a Christian civil court to *separate but equal authority* with a Christian church court, two steps are mandatory: judges must be members of Trinitarian churches, and the civil legal order must be based self-consciously on biblical revelation, just as a church court is. *This means theocracy*.

Paul here does not invoke biblical law as the basis of his opposition to pagan civil courts. Instead, he invokes eschatology. In order to defend point four of the biblical covenant model (judgment and sanctions), he invokes point five (eschatology), not point three (law). This New Testament passage presents the eschatological foundation of the case against political pluralism. After the final judgment of mankind, covenant-keepers will declare covenant-breaking angels as deserving of eternal torment, and God will enforce their declaration.

This principle of *hierarchical authority*—covenant-keepers' exercise of rule over covenant-breakers—governs Paul's definition of *civil justice*. Pagan civil courts are inferior to church courts, and they should therefore be avoided by Christians in disputes with each other. Better to suffer economic loss, he said, rather than to violate this principle of justice. To violate this principle of justice is to defraud the brethren.

5. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), Part 3.

6. Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983).

7. Roman law entered Europe by way of the Emperor Justinian's sixth-century legal code, the *Corpus iurus civilis*.

7

DISCIPLINE AND THE CHURCH'S INHERITANCE

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

I CORINTHIANS 6:9–11

The theocentric focus of this passage is the inheritance provided by God. Inheritance is point five of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. Condemnation Despite Confession

This continues Paul's discussion of church courts and the proper administration of justice.

Which acts identify an unrighteous person? Paul answers this without hesitation. He lists sins that identify men as being outside the kingdom of God. He had just presented another list: "I wrote unto you in an epistle[2] not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 5. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1988] 2010), ch. 5.

2. A lost epistle.

eat" (I Cor. 5: 9–11). There was no question in Paul's mind that such sinners as these were members of the congregation. He compiled another list in his first letter to Timothy. "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons . . ." (I Tim. 1:9–10a).[3] And he had more. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Tim. 3:1–7). Such men were inside the churches, operating as shepherds. This was not a prophecy of some distant era. The last days had come: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1–2).

Paul was the great preacher of salvation by grace through faith. He was also the great cataloguer of sins that testify judicially against the presence of saving faith. Those who consistently commit evil acts such as these are outside the kingdom of God. Unless they repent, they will not inherit the kingdom, because they are not in it. Any theology that denies Paul's doctrine of grace is wrong. Any theology that denies Paul's doctrine of non-inheritance is wrong. He provided the church with catalogues of sins that mark people without grace.

The question is this: When a person says that he is saved by grace, and he has gained church membership based on this confession, yet he commits sins that mark him as outside the kingdom of God, what is his local congregation to do? What standard should its court use to assess the legitimacy of his confession? Is his confession judicially annulled by his actions?

3. Gary North, *Hierarchy and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Timothy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), ch. 1.

B. Purging the Local Church

The first group of non-inheritors is sexually debauched: fornicators (which in the Old Covenant was associated with idolaters),[4] idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind. Members of the second group commit economic crimes: thieves, covetous, extortioners. The list in First Timothy includes another economic category: menstealers. This is kidnapping in the broadest sense. It unquestionably includes slave-traders.

(Rev. George Bourne, a Presbyterian minister in Virginia, was defrocked by his presbytery in 1815 for saying that slave-owning is a sin because slave-owners prior to 1808 had paid professional kidnappers to commit the crime for them.[5] The Presbyterian Church's General Assembly in 1818 permitted this decision to stand, but only after it had retroactively eliminated this interpretation of kidnapping from its *Constitution* [1806].[6] Bourne's abolitionist ideas were, more than a decade later, adopted by Unitarian leaders of the abolitionist movement, but without attribution. Only after the military defeat of the South in 1865 did the South's Christians and their churches finally conclude that the South's system of chattel slavery had been opposed to the Bible, just as Bourne had said. Southern pastors and theologians, Robert Dabney excepted,[7] surrendered to Bourne's view of the institution, but only after General Lee had surrendered to General Grant.)

Economic sins are not so prominent in these lists as sexual sins. All of these sins draw men into the paths of destruction. Better put, they keep fallen men on these paths, for men are born on these paths. This conclusion is one application of the doctrine of original sin.

The theological problem here is not the fact that sinners are outside of the kingdom of God. The theological problem that concerned Paul was the presence in the congregations of people who are known to commit such sins. How could it be that those who had gained

4. The obvious example is the Book of Hosea: Israel as a prostitute and idolatrous.

5. By 1815, Virginian slave-owners commonly bred slaves for export into the deep South, where the land was more fertile for high-income cotton production. The importation of slaves had legally ceased in 1808. This law created an oligopoly for Southern slave-owners. On the profitability of Southern slavery, see the articles in Hugh G. J. Aitken (ed.), *Did Slavery Pay?* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), especially "The Economics of Slavery in the Antebellum South," by Conrad and Meyer.

6. Gary North, *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1996), pp. 123–29.

7. He published his wartime manuscript, *A Defense of Virginia*, which defended chattel slavery, in 1867, two years after Lee surrendered.

admission as members could practice such sins? Does this mean that a verbal profession of faith and participation in the sacraments condemned these people? Did their actions constitute testimony against them? Paul clearly warns against the presence of such people in a congregation. What, then, had been the efficacy of their original profession of faith? Are they backsliders who have somehow lost both their faith and their salvation? If so, then what happens to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints? How are we to interpret Paul's words? "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38–39).

Paul's point: faith that does not produce sin-reducing changes in human behavior is not saving faith. Protestants may not like this conclusion, but Paul's words leave no wiggle room. The people who practice these sins are covenant-breakers, no matter what they say now or have said publicly. The church must exercise discipline to rid itself of such people. This is what the epistle's fifth chapter is all about. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5:4–8). The "old leaven" spoken of here is a church member who seeks to participate in the Lord's Supper, the New Testament's equivalent of the Passover's shared meal.

C. Inheritance and Disinheritance

The language of inheritance once again appears in the context of God's kingdom. Jesus had told the Pharisees: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). This nation is the church. The public mark of the church, Jesus said, is its bearing of the fruits of righteousness. These fruits are public evidence of its inheritance. Paul is here unsparing of sinners. They must be expelled.

They are not Christians, despite any public confession of faith they might make. They must not be given access to the table of the Lord.

Paul is demanding their *public disinheritance* by the church. This is the economic meaning of excommunication. It is also the eschatological meaning. The known sinner must not be allowed to participate in a common meal that is the church's formal means of covenant renewal. Disinheritance of sinners helps to retain the fruits of righteousness inside the church. These fruits are the mark of the church's inheritance, Jesus had told the Pharisees. God had disinherited Old Covenant Israel because of the nation's persistent sins. A local congregation has this example as a warning: *disinherit or be disinherited*.

The concept of inheritance is more than economic. It has to do with sonship, and sonship is more than economic. Paul is setting forth moral criteria that enable church officers to distinguish the disinherited sons of Adam from the adopted sons through Christ. The fulness of the church's inheritance can come only after the complete removal of the disinherited sons. This will not take place in history. "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world" (Matt. 13:38–40).[8]

Disinheritance is an inescapable concept. It is never a question of inheritance vs. disinheritance. It is always a question of whose disinheritance. In this epistle, Paul makes it clear that the church must publicly announce the legal status of every disinherited son. It does this through excommunication. If it does not do this, then it becomes corrupted. This calls into question the church's inheritance. Flagrant sinners are not part of the kingdom. A church that refuses to impose discipline on its unrighteous members risks being dealt with harshly by God. The public disinheritance of sinful church members is mandatory for the church's inheritance in history.

Conclusion

This epistle is about judgment. Peter wrote: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (I Peter 4:17). Paul made the same point in this epistle. The church

8. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 29.

is to judge those under its covenantal authority who bring disrepute to the church. The sins of commission include economic sins. The church serves as an agent of God in bringing judgment against economic wrongdoing. It possesses lawful authority over its members.

8

CALLING AND OCCUPATION

> *Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.*
>
> I CORINTHIANS 7:20–24

The theocentric focus here is God's sovereignty over every person's current position in life. This is point one of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. The Calling

"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." The Greek work translated here as "calling" is used repeatedly the New Testament in the sense of God's redemption of sinners and His assignment to them of their kingdom tasks. Paul wrote elsewhere: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (Eph. 4:4). "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (II Tim. 1:8–9). God has a lifetime purpose for each of His called-out saints.

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 1. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 1.

Paul notes that in Corinth, the church did not have members who were leaders in society. This, he says, was a universal condition of the church in his day. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (I Cor. 1:26). Paul's message was that Christians in Corinth were not among society's "best and brightest." His observation need not apply to the church in every era of history, but generally it has. This means that the early church began with a seeming liability: a lack of experienced leadership. Nevertheless, he wrote in chapter 6, members should rely on the lowliest member to provide judgment between disputants in preference to going before covenant-breaking civil judges. Better to be governed by men who fear God than by experts in Roman civil law.[2]

1. Called by God

Here is Paul's main point in this passage: redeemed men's callings are from God, not from society. Covenant-keepers are to look to God, not to society, for guidance on what they are to do with their lives. They have legitimate hope in their kingdom inheritance, but not in earthly success, Paul wrote elsewhere. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18). The Christian walk is inherently a lowly walk, psychologically speaking. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love (Eph. 4:1–2). But this lowly walk is a high calling. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14)

The calling is a God-given assignment. We are to work diligently to prove to ourselves that we received God's call. Our work testifies to the legitimacy of our election, Peter said. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Peter 1:10). This is consistent with Paul's discussion of personal salvation and a lifetime of predestinated good works: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8–10).

2. Chapter 6.

The New Testament's concept of the calling does not usually refer to a man's income-generating occupation, although it can sometimes mean this, as in the case of the job of minister of the gospel.[3] Its meaning is broader: *the call to lifetime service* that God has given to each of the elect. This distinction between calling and occupation is not widely understood. A misinterpretation of the Pauline meaning of "calling" has been made famous in academic circles by a book by the German sociologist, Max Weber: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1906). Weber argued that the Calvinistic idea of the calling as an occupation was central in the development of the inner discipline that is so important in the formation of the capitalist spirit. Success in one's occupation was seen by Calvinists as temporal proof of God's eternal blessing, he argued. Weber hedged his language, but this is what he meant.[4] This is surely how his readers have long understood his thesis. Essentially, Weber transferred Peter's words regarding the calling to the occupation. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Peter 1:10). This view of the calling was not what Calvin held. He did not see personal economic success as confirming a man's election to salvation. Nevertheless, some elements of Weber's version of the idea of calling can be found in the writings of certain seventeenth-century Calvinists. Some of them did believe that God rewards faithful covenantal service with economic success. But none of them believed that economic success constitutes stand-alone evidence of saving faith.

2. Service to God

Paul's idea of the calling was lifetime service to God. We can think of this as *vertical subordination*.[5] But how do we manifest our service to God? It has to involve service to other people. This is because God is represented in history by men. Mankind is God's corporate steward in a hierarchy. This is the meaning of the dominion covenant, which defines man (Gen. 1:26–28).[6]

3. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward" (I Tim. 5:17–18).

4. Gary North, "Weber's 'Protestant Ethic' Hypothesis," *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, III (Summer 1976).

5. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, ch. 2. North, *Unconditional Surrender*, ch. 2.

6. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), chaps. 3, 4.

Men own resources. They possess the *legal authority* to dispose of these resources as they see fit. Inanimate resources possess no lawful claim against owners. Then what about slavery? Is it a valid Christian ideal? Paul said no. In this passage, Paul specifically recommends that slaves accept their liberty if it is offered to them by their masters. Why? Because Christians can better serve God as *free agents* who are not legally bound to another individual. Paul said much the same thing in the same passage in regard to the wisdom of avoiding marriage. "But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband" (I Cor. 7:32–34).

In what way is slavery like marriage? First, both systems are established by a legal bond. Marriage's bond is much tighter; it is established by covenant oath under God. Second, both institutions restrict the independence of their members. A legal bond limits the mobility of all parties who are bound by its terms. This usually includes geographical mobility. Paul recommended mobility for God's servants: a life unencumbered by legal obligations to others. He possessed such mobility. A slave does not possess this. Neither does a married person.

Paul told slaves to take their liberty if it was offered. This meant a change in their occupations: from permanent service to one family to permanent service to the market. This meant abandoning predictable income and legal protection provided by another person. It also meant the legal authority to choose one's occupation from among the opportunities available. It was this greater flexibility in choosing how to earn a living that strengthened their callings before God. They could make their own decisions regarding the selection of one lifetime calling and multiple jobs over time. Paul's job was making tents (Acts 18:3). This was not his calling. It was his occupation. Being a tentmaker gave him tremendous geographical flexibility. He could earn an income almost anywhere. This strengthened his calling as an evangelist and an apostle. What his calling required was geographical mobility.

The calling is always a matter of subordination to God through specific human mediators. Point two of the biblical covenant is hierarchy.[7]

7. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, ch. 2. North, *Unconditional Surrender*, ch. 2.

God is represented in history by specific individuals. He has delegated lawful authority to these individuals. No one operates in this world without mediators. Something must sustain every person. We are all dependent on nature. Except in the case of hermits, men's mediators include humans. These human mediators are only rarely sacramental mediators. Only when preaching from the pulpit during a worship service or when administering the sacraments does a man exercise sacramental mediatory authority. But everyone is under mediatorial authority all of the time. Even a hermit is under Christ's mediatorial authority.

3. Multiple Hierarchies

Because of multiple hierarchies in history, an individual serves multiple masters. A wife serves her husband. Her husband serves his employer, who in turn serves customers. Church members pay tithes and subordinate themselves to church officers. Citizens serve magistrates, yet in a democracy, they have indirect authority over who is hired or fired. A general in an army is under civilian control in most democracies. The men under his immediate authority are also voters. So, authority under democratic capitalism is mixed. There is no final voice of human authority other than Jesus Christ, the perfect man, who sits on a throne in heaven (Heb. 12:2). He is outside of history. The final voice of authority in history is the Bible, but it speaks through multiple interpreters. There is no agency in history that lawfully declares: "This is the final authority."

This means that service to God—the calling—has multiple aspects. It is not just about making money. It is not just about exercising ownership. It is not just about obedience to civil law. The calling requires *performance under mixed authorities*.

Men live under multiple oath-bound, covenantal hierarchies in history: church, state, and family. They are also under hierarchies that in turn are under one or more of these primary hierarchies. The most universal hierarchy for modern man is economic: the free market. It is not visibly a hierarchy, but both conceptually and operationally, it is. It is a system of dual authority: partially judicial, partially economic. The *judicial* hierarchy is the hierarchy of *ownership*. The owner of property has the legal right to use it as he sees fit and to exclude non-owners from its use. The *economic* hierarchy is *customer-driven*: money talks.

The judicial hierarchy of ownership is subordinate to the economic hierarchy in the sense of dependence. If customers refuse to compete

for the ownership of any consumer good, its price falls to slightly above zero. Its price is whatever asset its owner must forfeit by retaining ownership. If customers refuse to buy a producer's output, he will go out of business. Those under his economic authority will lose their jobs. So, the legal owners do act on behalf of God and God's kingdom, but this hierarchical authority is mediated through customers. Owners fulfil the dominion covenant as legally responsible agents before God, but they do so as economic agents of customers.

A worker is subordinate to his employer's hierarchy, which gives him instructions and provides him with tools and marketing services for his output. His employer pays him a salary in exchange for his labor. But this hierarchy is a dual hierarchy. A specific group of potential customers will determine whether he can keep his job. Their identities are unknown to the worker. His identity is equally unknown to them. He is employed by a specific group of entrepreneurs, the corporation's share owners, who have delegated to senior managers the task of persuading certain customers to buy the company's output at a price greater than what it paid to produce this output, i.e., sell at a profit. If these customers refuse to buy, the company will go out of business. This is a fearful negative sanction for share owners, senior managers, and employees.

Hierarchies can be both judicial or economic. A judicial hierarchy is a system based on a legal claim: God's legal claim on an individual and his output through God's delegated representatives' legal claims on a person. Church, state, and family all involve legal claims that are established by voluntary oaths and oath-signs in which the oath-taker implicitly or explicitly calls down God's wrath on him if he violates the terms of the covenant. That is, *a covenantal oath is self-maledictory*. An economic hierarchy may also involve legal claims, called contracts, which may be enforceable in a civil court, but this hierarchy is not established by a self-maledictory covenantal oath. It is temporary. A man may lawfully remove himself from the jurisdiction of this hierarchy when he has fulfilled the terms of the contract. He has much greater mobility. This non-covenantal relationship is what Paul recommended to slaves and unmarried people.

B. Replacement Cost

I have adopted a definition of the calling that is faithful to the biblical idea of the calling as God's service assignment to the individual. My definition adds an economic aspect: the cost of a person's replace-

ment. Here it is: "Your calling is the most important work you can do in which you would be most difficult to replace." The cost of replacement is a major consideration because of the individual's other opportunities for service. If he leaves one calling, he must be replaced. He serves in a new way, so he no longer serves in the old way. This places a burden on those who had depended on his service in the old calling: his employers and the beneficiaries of his output.

Think of a key athlete. Without him, his team may not win many games. Yet he may be better equipped to serve God in some other way. Can he somehow find a way to serve God both ways? Should he? In the twentieth century, the best-known example of a Christian athlete who faced such a dilemma was Eric Liddell, who refused to run in the 100-meter dash in the 1924 Olympic Games because a preliminary race was held on a Sunday. He was a strict sabbatarian. He had known of this scheduling for months in advance. He therefore switched to the 400-meter race. Instead of running the standard races for a sprinter, the 100 and 200, he ran the 200 and the 400. This was unheard of at the time. Only in the 1996 Olympics did America's Michael Johnson run both distances and win gold medals in both. Liddell in 1924 won the bronze medal (third place) in the 200 and the gold medal in the 400. Because he did not run in the 100, his teammate, Harold Abrahams, won the gold medal. This positive outcome was unforeseen prior to the races. Half a century after Liddell's triumph, a movie director read about his decision not to run, and the result was *Chariots of Fire* (1980), the unexpected Academy Award winner in 1981, and now a classic film.

Liddell knew what his calling was: a Christian missionary, not an athlete. He viewed his athletic prowess as an extension of his ministry. He viewed his victories in the same way. He became a world-famous athlete, whose fame later made him the best-known foreign missionary in China and the best-known missionary ever sent out from Scotland. As the movie records at the end, when he died in a Japanese concentration camp in 1945, all of Scotland mourned.

Liddell's service as an athlete was part of his service as an evangelist and later as a foreign missionary. The movie, for drama's sake, created a conflict over his two forms of service. It portrayed Liddell's sister as being opposed to his running. This was not the case in real life. She, too, fully understood that his victories on the track were part of his larger service to God. In any case, he could not continue to run faster than the competition as he grew older. So, he could freely

leave his status as an athlete without violating Paul's injunction regarding the fixed lifetime calling. He would eventually have had to be replaced in the world of amateur athletics. Everyone knew this. It is expected of every athlete.

The dilemma of fixed lifetime service to God vs. better personal economic opportunities weighs heavily on modern Christians—or would if they had ever heard about this Pauline dilemma—because of the modern division of labor. They face so many opportunities.

C. The Division of Labor

Different people possess different gifts. Paul begins his discussion of the calling by saying that Christians generally serve in lowly capacities. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (I Cor. 1:26). The division of labor enables the church to function as a body, Paul says. Some of these tasks are undistinguished. "And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness" (I Cor. 12:23). Those Christians who have specific skills in one area should not think of themselves as inferior just because their area of service has low prestige. What he says about the division of labor in the church applies to every institution. It functions best as a unit when all of its members know their specific tasks and perform them well, irrespective of their tasks' social status.

1. Freedom

Paul says that a Christian should remain in his present calling. The one exception is the slave. It is best for the slave to gain his freedom. This was a new insight. The Mosaic law had made provision for voluntary servitude of covenant-keepers under covenant-keepers.

> And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day. And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee; Then thou shalt take an aul, and

> thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise (Deut. 15:12–17).

Paul's injunction represents a significant departure from the perspective of the Mosaic law. Freedom is said to be preferable to servitude. It is superior for Christian service. This means that a covenant-keeper is granted greater responsibility by the New Covenant than under the Old Covenant. God expects him to be an independent laborer. The benefit to God's kingdom of such freedom rests on a premise: covenant-keepers should serve God directly as independent owners of their own labor services, not as lifetime subordinates whose labor services legally belong to others.

The Old Covenant's model of covenant-keeping servitude was household servitude.[8] The permanent servant's hole in the ear was a covenantal mark of lifetime servitude. By a covenant oath and an oath-sign, a man was brought into a family, though not as a legal heir. This extension of family authority over non-adopted, voluntary hirelings is weakened in the New Testament, though not formally abolished. The faithful slave owner in Paul's era—before the Old Covenant was completely replaced by the New in A.D. 70[9]—was not compelled to release his covenant-keeping slaves, but he was encouraged to do so (Philemon), and slaves in turn were encouraged to accept their liberty. Paul made an important break with the Mosaic covenant on this point. There should be no doubt: freedom is preferable to slavery, even voluntary slavery. The New Covenant is liberating, compared to the Old Covenant.

2. Responsibility

This change in perspective had to do with increasing an individual's responsibility before God. A covenant-keeper is supposed to make an assessment of whatever it is that God wants him to accomplish in history. He should seek counsel, but he must decide for himself. He must bear the consequences of his decisions and his actions. Paul later wrote to the Corinthians: "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (II Cor. 9:6).

---

8. Inter-generational slavery for covenantal foreigners was a completely different model (Lev. 25:44–46). See Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), ch. 4.

9. Kenneth L. Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

A society with a high division of labor allows an individual a far wider selection of areas of service. His personally unique array of talents is more likely to match the opportunities for serving God in a society that enjoys a high division of labor. The match-up of skills and demand will be tighter, if he can discover the opportunity. The New Testament Christian is understood to be the best judge of this match-up. He must bear the consequences and also reap the reward—a heavenly reward. He must select his area of service. This takes accurate self-judgment. He must assess both his abilities and his opportunities. Then he must choose what to do.

A high division of labor allows an employer to identify more rigorously the economic value of each employee's contribution to the production process. He can pay the worker what the customers have determined that he is worth: his replacement cost. The division of labor also allows the employer's competitors to assess this market value, which is the result of competition: employers vs. would-be employers; employees vs. would-be employees. Information about the economic value of a specific task is more readily available when this task is narrowly circumscribed by the free market's production process. As Adam Smith wrote in 1776, the division of labor is limited by the extent of the market.[10]

The greater the degree of personal economic freedom in a market, the more pervasive the free market becomes. When men compete for resources, the market's system of pricing extends into more areas of life. This means that productive services become more narrowly circumscribed: specialization of labor. *Freedom of choice extends the domain of the free market*. Paul's advice to slaves is to accept this increase in personal freedom. This necessarily involves an extension of personal responsibility.

What Paul did not say was that a man's highest area of service is best determined by competitive bidding by customers. *Paul had no concept of the calling as the highest-paying form of employment*. He taught that men should remain in their callings, with the exception of slaves. In this sense, *Paul was not a defender of increasing per capita output, either for individuals or societies*. He did not say that the servant of God should decide how best to serve God by accepting a job that pays a high salary and offers other benefits, such as a large expense account and a budget sufficient to hire a good-looking secretary. By opposing an exclusively monetary view of success, *the New Testament*

10. Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book I, Chapter III.

retards the market-driven extension of the division of labor. How? Because the increasing use of money in an exchange economy extends both free trade and the specialization of production. Paul was no lover of money. As he wrote elsewhere, "the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Tim. 6:10).[11]

D. Changing Jobs

Paul says that a Christian should not change his calling. Does this mean that he should not change his job? No. To identify the calling with the job is a mistake. It would be as if someone had identified Eric Liddell's calling with his running, which the movie portrays the British Olympic committee as having done. The movie makes it clear that running was not his calling. The central scene in this regard is where the committee meets with Liddell in an opulent drawing room. The crusty old man who chairs the committee argues that Liddell should run the 100-meter dash. His country is counting on him. The proper order of importance of service is to country, then to God. A younger committee member defends Liddell, suggesting that the idea of country before God is what got the nations of Europe into the devastation of the world war. Liddell believes in God before country, the man says, and his opinion should be respected. The movie makes it clear that Liddell's calling encompassed his running, but running did not define it. The non-Christian screenplay writer, who won the Academy Award, grasped this fact and made this theme central to Liddell's story. The screenplay also recognizes that Harold Abrahams was also more than a runner. He was a Jew, and as he was portrayed in the movie (by a Roman Catholic actor), he was determined to defeat in a larger sense all those who were prejudiced against him. The screenplay makes it clear that Abrahams was running for personal glory as a way to make a personal statement of his own excellence. The movie ends with Abrahams' emotional defeat: the gold medal did not mean much to him after all. The heart of the difference between the two men is seen in their callings, not their occupation. Liddell ran for God; Abrahams ran for glory. Liddell's victory was a joy to him because, as he says in the movie to his sister, "When I run, I feel God's pleasure."

Eric Liddell had a job in 1924: running the 100-meter and 200-me-

11. Gary North, *Hierarchy and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Timothy* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 10.

ter dashes in the Olympics. For the sake of his calling, he switched from the 100 to the 400. He received public criticism for making this switch until after the 400-meter race was over. He set the Olympic record in the 400. This forever silenced the critics of his job-switching.

Liddell changed jobs in 1925: from athlete and part-time domestic evangelist to foreign missionary and part-time athlete. He remained involved with sports in China. He taught children how to play British sports. He occasionally ran in races, which he won. At no time did he did change callings. He was a missionary—though not always a foreign missionary—from the beginning of his athletic career to the end of his life. He died in a prison camp in this capacity. He was inside that camp because of the calling he had chosen, and he retained his godly testimony among the prisoners.

Let me return to my definition of a calling as *the most important service to God in which you would be the most difficult to replace*. My calling in life to write this economic commentary and the economic treatise that will be based on it. No one else has ever attempted to write an economic commentary on the Bible. I began in 1973, four decades ago. The project has not earned me a living. It has cost me a great deal of donated time to raise the money to pay for typesetting, printing, and distribution of the pre-Web volumes and their supporting books.[12] I have never taken a salary or book royalties for this work.

I supported myself from 1974 to 2005 by writing an economic newsletter and by investing. Beginning in 2005, I launched my website, *Gary North's Specific Answers*. It immediately became my primary source of income. I sent out the first issue of my *Remnant Review* newsletter exactly one year after the first chapter of my projected commentary was published in the *Chalcedon Report* (May 1973). I firmly believe that God gave me the idea for the newsletter because I had already begun my calling and had continued in the commentary project for a year. God has sustained me in both of these publishing efforts. I have had other jobs in addition to the newsletter. I worked for six months as a researcher for Ron Paul (1976). I worked part-time as a financial counselor for *The Ruff Times* (1977–79). I briefly held an endowed professorial chair in free market economics at Campbell College (1979). But my calling has never changed. The most important work that I can do in which I seem to be irreplaceable is writing this commentary. No employer would have imagined that this was my

12. *Dominion and Common Grace* (1987), *Is the World Running Down?* (1988), *Political Polytheism* (1989), *Millennialism and Social Theory* (1990).

most important work. No employer would have funded it. My legal freedom to make my choice of calling enabled me to begin it and to pursue it. The wide range of employment opportunities in the world's largest and most free market has enabled me to earn a living in order to pursue my calling.

E. Specialization and Compound Economic Growth

Specialization of production accompanies an increase in the division of labor. The specialist masters a narrow aspect of production. In a free market society, through the competition of the employer against would-be employers, and the competition of the employee against would-be employees, an employee is paid the value of his productive services to the overall production process. Customers decide retroactively whether this expenditure was profitable for the employer. By specializing, the worker maximizes the value of his output. If he seeks to maximize his monetary income, he must match his skills with the customers' highest bidding for these skills.

When a person devotes time and concentration to a particular skill, he gets better at it. This increases his productivity. He can produce more in the same time period with the same tools. *Paul's injunction promotes specialization in the calling*. He tells his readers not to change their callings. In the words of the traditional folk saying, they should stick to their knitting.

This strategy takes advantage of the phenomenon known as compound growth. When any base—e.g., population, capital, or knowledge—grows over time, it becomes ever-more dominant in its environment. The compounding effect creates enormous results if it continues long enough. Eventually, the base approaches infinity as a limit. Paul tells his readers that they should devote a lifetime to the mastery of their individual callings. "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God" (v. 24). This lifetime of service adds up over time. It more than adds up; it multiplies.

What applies to individuals also applies to the kingdoms of which they are members. Each kingdom's compounding process goes on inter-generationally. The process ceases for a covenant-breaking society after a few generations, but covenant-keepers are able to extend the process indefinitely. "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands

of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:5–6). This compounding process makes possible the steady extension of the kingdom of God in history. The compound growth of the kingdom of God can fill the earth over time because Satan's rival kingdom cannot maintain such growth. This conclusion is consistent with Daniel's vision.

> Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth (Dan. 2:34–35).

The postmillennial implications here are obvious.

F. Social Status

Social status is not the same as economic class. There is a French phase, *nouveaux riches*. It refers to newly rich people. As it is commonly used, the phrase implies that their economic success has not been matched by their social success. They have made money; they have not gained the necessary social graces to enter into high society. They may have bought large homes. They have not been able to buy social acceptance by those people whose opinions really matter. Who are these people who really matter? This is *the* social question. We might say, "matter to themselves" and "matter to certain socially excluded rich newcomers."

In academic sociology, the word "class" relates to economic position. Karl Marx is the most famous theorist of class, even though he never got around to defining the term.[13] The word "status" refers to social position. Class and social status are analytically distinct. Class position is earned: by economic performance, by inheritance, or by an unforeseen event. Social status positions are conferred. This is why people with a high class position resent their not being able to obtain high social status. Their inability to obtain it seems to put them in their place, and they resent being put there. They are not able to set the terms of their social status. They are dependent on the non-economic evaluations of others, who may not have attained

13. On the final page of his never-completed third volume of *Das Kapital*, Marx said he would define "class." He lived for more than a decade after writing this, but he never got around to this deferred project.

equal wealth. Customers or possibly citizen-taxpayers have granted them their class position, but those who possess high status ration out status positions to rival claimants. The terms of competition are different.

Paul did not concern himself at all with social status. As a Pharisee, he had possessed high social status in Israel. He offered this as background in his letter to the Philippians (3:4–6). He had abandoned all this in no uncertain terms. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (v. 7). He knew that his office as an apostle now condemned him in the eyes of the religious leaders of Israel. Roman officials were required to honor his legal status as a Roman citizen, but they did not accept him socially, nor did he expect them to. As for economic class, he knew that he was a poor man. So, two of the most powerful personal motivational factors in the creation of a social order, class position and social status position, did not motivate him. He said that the gospel should make a person indifferent to these motivations. "Art thou called being a servant? care not for it" (v. 21a). The slave was at the bottom of the social hierarchy and the economic hierarchy. This is of no concern, Paul says. What matters is the freedom to pursue one's calling.

The model for this lack of concern about social status is Jesus.

> Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Phil. 2:5–13).[14]

Jesus rose in both senses—socially and bodily—because He first subordinated Himself in both senses. He went to the cross as a convicted criminal. Christians are to do the same in principle. Paul in chapter 6 says that Christians will judge the angels. But the price of

14. Gary North, *Ethics and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on the Epistles* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 20.

this authority is low status in history until His kingdom's compounding process finally replaces covenant-breaking society. In a covenant-breaking society, upward social mobility is blocked for the faithful covenant-keeper. Those who confer high social status are opposed to the gospel's standards and motivations. The gospel regards high social status as nothing of eternal importance, and therefore nothing of spiritual importance. Jesus warned His disciples: "Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23:10–12). This is a reversal of conventional concepts of social hierarchy and therefore social status. The servant is the model.

In contrast to social status, a concept of servantship underlies the economic theory of the free market. The economically successful person is a producer or seller who best serves the wants of customers.

Social status, however, is conferred. Christian virtues do not lend themselves to high social status in a covenant-breaking society. These virtues do sometimes lend themselves to special status. In our once-Christian West, such virtues as honor, sacrificial service to the less fortunate, courage under fire in wartime, and other forms of voluntarily accepted service still bring special status. This special status is conferred in terms of an essentially Christian view of service. The person who possesses these virtues will not normally be invited to gatherings of socially prominent people, for he has few contacts with them, but he is welcomed as an honored, one-time guest when he is invited by a representative of the group. Again, the example of Eric Liddell would be representative. He did not move in high social circles in the British Empire, but anyone in these circles would have regarded it as an honor in 1925 to have met him at such a gathering. He possessed special status after his Olympic victory, which was not the same as high status. Paul would have regarded such special status, based on sacrificial service, as legitimate, but not worth pursuing for its own sake.

To confer status is to make a judgment about someone's personal characteristics, which may include his family's status. Social status is imputed by those persons making the judgment. If he who possesses high social status then persuades others with high status to join with him in the unofficial conferring of such status, then the object of this confirmation gains high status. The recipient cannot purchase this in a competitive market marked by open entry. The social status market

is necessarily a closed market. The high value of high status is maintained by the closed nature of the confirmation process. High social status is like currency: the more of it that is distributed, the less its value.

High social status is conferred on an individual by those who already possess it. They decide to share it with him. They retain what they issue: high status. This is in sharp contrast to a free market, where customers impute value to output rather than to the producer. Irrespective of his social status, a producer can gain money by satisfying the desires of customers. This is because customers judge the value of the output in terms of their goals, not in terms of the personal characteristics of the producer. Customers confer money, not status. They possess money, which is easily transferable in a marketplace with open entry. The status "marketplace" is marked by its closed entry.

The difference in the free market and status is analogous to the difference between a supermarket and an exclusive club. It costs money to join the club, but money alone is not sufficient. You must be invited to join. In contrast, it costs no money to walk into a supermarket. It costs money only to carry something out of it that you did not carry into it. Money alone is sufficient. Ownership is conferred at a check-out counter. Status is not conferred at a check-out counter.

The free market allows people of low social status to become rich. Immigrants, members of racial minorities or religious minorities, and other people who face social discrimination can achieve economic success because of the nature of imputation in a free market. Customers impute value to output rather than the status of the producer. This is a liberating force in society.

G. Judicial Status

God unilaterally and sovereignly confers the only status that counts eternally: saved or lost. Both are judicial categories. Judicial status is conferred by God, not purchased by the recipient. Jesus warned: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).[15] In this sense, salvation is closer to social status than it is to class. The key issue is confirmation.

What distinguishes this judicial status from social status is the basis of the confirmation. The granting of salvation has nothing to do with the personal characteristics of the recipient. It has everything to

15. Gary North, *Trust and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Mark and John* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 11.

do with the personal characteristics of the individual's judicial representative: either Adam or Christ. Later in this epistle, Paul writes: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22). God grants salvation—superior judicial status—to those whom He chooses. He does not make this grant based on the accomplishments of the recipient. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8–9).

Because the judicial status of salvation can be at odds with both class and social status, Paul dismisses both as spiritually peripheral matters. Both class and social status are subordinate to a person's calling before God. This calling is the individual's life-long working out of the original grant of salvation by God. Elsewhere, Paul writes: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). This does not mean that we work our way into salvation. It means that we must work out the salvation that is already ours.

In chapter 3 of this epistle, Paul discusses God's final judgment.[16] God imputes value to a redeemed person's work: gold, silver, and precious stones vs. wood, hay, and stubble (v. 12).[17] He announces this retroactively on judgment day. In this sense, God acts as a customer does. He judges the value of a redeemed person's lifetime output. But this person is already redeemed. His output is an extension of his salvation, not his damnation. "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (vv. 14–15). This means that the *economic* aspect of God's imputation is secondary to the *judicial* aspect of God's imputation. Personal production is important, whether we are speaking of calling or occupation, but not nearly so important as salvation, which is granted exclusively in terms of God's sovereign grace. Paul makes this clear in Romans 9: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (vv. 17–18). Then God sovereignly grants the redeemed person's output, step by step: "For we are his

16. Chapter 3.
17. *Ibid.*, ch. 12.

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). So, it is all grace.

Conclusion

Paul recommended that each person accept a single lifetime calling in God's earthly kingdom. The person who discovers his highest area of service to God and who pursues it throughout his life is a successful person, according to God's imputation of success. This calling need not have anything to do with high monetary income. It usually has nothing to do with high social status, except perhaps negatively: making it unattainable in a covenant-breaking society. The calling is a matter of matching one's God-given talents to a God-given assignment. Freedom allows a person to make a better match-up. This is why Paul recommended that a slave accept manumission if it was offered. A high division of labor also enables a person to make a better match-up. The more opportunities for lifetime service there are, the more likely that a person will be able to match up his God-given gifts with his God-given assignment. His assignment may not have much to do with his gift of making money. His assignment is a matter of performing a unique service that is needed in the kingdom. How unique? Sufficiently unique so as to make his replacement difficult.

Nevertheless, a high division of labor society, which is based on monetary exchange, offers greater temptations to miss one's calling. How? Because it offers greater choice. With greater choice comes greater responsibility. The lure of money is very great. Men are then tempted to define the calling as occupation. They may choose that occupation which offers the most money. This is service to mammon rather than God. In short, there are no free lunches in this life. With greater liberty comes greater temptation. Paul did not place economic growth and the reduction of poverty on his list of desirable goals. Neither did Christ. These beneficial economic results are the products of covenant-keeping, but they are not valid substitutes for it.

9

A CONFIRMED BACHELOR'S BIAS

Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

I CORINTHIANS 7:25–31

The theocentric focus of this passage is service to God. The context is marriage, a covenantal institution sealed by a lawful, binding oath.[1] The concept of the self-maledictory oath is point four of the biblical covenant model.[2]

A. The Time Is Short

This passage is unique in the New Testament. Paul offers marital advice, but he admits that he is not speaking authoritatively. He is not laying down the law. The key phrase is "my judgment." "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my

1. Ray R. Sutton, *Second Chance: Biblical Blueprints for Divorce and Remarriage* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

2. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 4.

judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful" (v. 25). "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God" (vv. 39–40). His readers did not have to take his advice. They still don't. There is no other command in the Bible that begins with such an announcement: "Take it or leave it."

Paul was speaking in terms of a specific time frame. "But this I say, brethren, the time is short" (v. 29a). Why short? He did not say. Did he expect the imminent bodily return of Jesus Christ in final judgment? Some liberal Bible commentators argue that he did. Paul made a mistake, they say or at least imply. This interpretation undermines the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Bible. If Paul got the facts wrong, yet the epistle still is part of the Bible, then the entire Bible becomes suspect—guilt by association. Why was the time short? Was this a reference to eschatology: the end of history? That cannot be, unless he made a mistake. History did not end.

Did the short time frame refer to the replacement of the Old Covenant at the fall of Jerusalem?[3] The period of transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant had about fifteen years to go when he wrote this letter. Part of that transition was Nero's year of persecution in A.D. 64/65, about a decade in the future. This persecution judicially separated Christianity from Judaism in Roman law. In A.D. 66, the revolt of the Jews in Palestine began. It did not end until it was crushed in A.D. 70. The church, having gone through its time of troubles with Nero, was not implicated in this Jewish revolt.[4] Rome went through five emperors from A.D. 66–70, and the survivor was Vespasian, the general who, along with his son Titus, was the victor over Israel.

It is possible to make the case that Paul was looking ahead a decade to the church's time of troubles. A church member who was encumbered with a wife and children would be especially burdened. Better not to marry, Paul concluded. "Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you" (v. 28b). But was near-term prophecy really what undergirded his marital advice? Before we can

3. Kenneth L. Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

4. Carsten Peter Thiede and Matthew D'Ancona, *Eyewitness to Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), pp. 48–51.

answer this with any confidence, we need to consider the context: Paul's discussion of the world.

B. The World

God made the world (Acts 17:24). The world is temporary. "For the fashion of this world passeth away" (v. 31b). This world reflects God. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).[5] God predestined the salvation of every redeemed person before the creation of the world. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4).

The Greek word for "world"—*kosmos*—is broader than just the Old Covenant order. It is used in several ways in the New Testament: the creation in general, the sin-cursed biological world (Heb. 11:7; II Peter 2:5), sinful humanity (John 14:22; Rom. 5:12; II Cor. 5:19; John 17:9; II Cor. 11:32; I John 5:19), time, in contrast to eternity (Matt. 4:8; John 12:25; I Cor. 7:33; Eph. 2:12; I John 2:15), the social and economic affairs of this life (Mark 8:36), covenant-breaking society (John 7:7; 17:14; 18:36; Eph. 2:2; Col. 2:20; James 4:4), the Roman empire (Rom. 1:8), and the Mosaic law (Gal. 4:3–5). Paul in this epistle uses it most often in the sense of covenant-breaking society.[6] But in this chapter, he uses it with respect to the social and economic affairs of life.[7] Paul in this section is saying that *the affairs of this life are inherently transitory*. It was not just that the Roman civil order was transitory, or that the Old Covenant order was transitory, but the concerns of this world are transitory. This is because the world itself is transitory. Paul

5. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 1.

6. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (I Cor. 1:27). "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (I Cor. 2:12). "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (I Cor. 3:19). "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" (I Cor 6:2).

7. "But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife" (I Cor. 7:33). "There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband" (I Cor. 7:34).

here returns to a theme found in Christ's parables: the sharp contrast between this world and eternity. *This world is not to be trusted*. Jesus said that we are to lay up treasure in heaven by surrendering our treasure in history for the sake of kingdom-building projects.[8] Paul says that Christians would be wise to avoid marriage.

Paul is speaking as a man with no ties to either family or nation. In order to serve Christ, Paul had abandoned everything except the church and his legal status as a free man, and he would eventually abandon even his freedom. He had no wife and no place to call home. Jesus had lived in a similar condition. "And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). Neither of them possessed any of this world's comforts. But why did Paul recommend his pilgrim lifestyle to others? Paul is not recommending moderation; he is recommending *asceticism*—an asceticism that begins with sexual asceticism. "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman" (I Cor. 7:1). A man can legitimately enjoy what is good in this life if he already possesses it, Paul says, but he should not trust it, and if he loses it, he should not seek to replace it. Paul's example here is the widow. "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God" (vv. 39–40).

This message is in stark contrast to what God had said of Adam. "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18). Paul's advice leads to a different conclusion for widows than for men: serving God through serving a husband is a less happy condition for a widow than serving God alone. Yet this recommendation, if widely followed, would leave widowers without replacement wives. Adam was given a wife because he needed a helper. Paul's advice to widows—to remain single—is in conflict with God's advice to men in general. What of widowers? Will they be happier alone? Will they be more productive alone? Are they unlike Adam, who needed a helper? Who will help them? If they marry younger virgins, then what happens to young men who also seek to marry? If widowhood and widowerhood are in fact less productive for God's kingdom than marriage, then Paul was

8. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 26.

recommending a widow's personal happiness and independent productivity at the expense of a greater extension of the kingdom of God in history through the division of labor in marriage. Not only was Paul recommending a low division of labor for widows, he was implying the same thing for the men whom widows would never marry.

Paul in this passage speaks of marriage as the God-given means of channeling lust—nothing more (vv. 1–2). There is no hint of the biblical doctrine of dominion through biological multiplication (Gen. 1:28). There is no discussion of the family in terms of the division of labor, which is in contrast to his discussion of the church (I Cor. 12).[9] His emphasis throughout this passage is on the superiority of individual service to God. "For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I" (vv. 7–8). He implies that an unmarried individual can serve God more effectively than a married person can because marriage is inherently worldly, unlike celibacy. He is quite forthright about this. "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband" (vv. 32B–34).

Why is seeking to please a covenant-keeping spouse "caring for the world"? Why not discuss marriage as part of a program to extend the kingdom of God in history? Having denigrated the concerns of this world in this passage, he then identifies marriage as second-best to celibacy because marriage is inherently more worldly than celibacy. Yet, for a covenant-keeper, seeking to serve another human being is surely seeking to serve God. If pleasing a spouse is worldly, then every institution in this life is worldly. Elsewhere, Paul wrote that Christ loves His church as a man loves his wife (Eph. 5:25–33). Is Christ's love for His church somehow defective because this love is expressed in history? Hardly. Then what is the problem with love for a spouse? How else are Christians to learn of Christ's love for His church? Why did Paul identify service to a spouse as serving the world?

I think it had to do with his personal preference for mobility. A

9. Chapter 14.

marriage covenant binds a person judicially and, to some extent, geographically. It channels the forms of service even as it channels the sex drive. *Marriage places boundaries on people's choices*. A married man is less mobile than a single man. Paul in this chapter identifies worldliness as institutionally restricted options: slavery and marriage. A married person is like a slave: restricted. A slave should take his freedom, if it is offered (I Cor. 7:21).[10] So should a widow, he said. This implies that a widower should, too.

Study after study has confirmed what God told Adam: marriage is more productive than unmarried life is. It significantly reduces crime. It extends men's life expectancy. The responsibilities of marriage pressure a man to work harder and smarter. He has mouths to feed other than his own. To increase his income, he must strive to serve customers more efficiently. His restricted options persuade him to concentrate his efforts on a limited set of tasks. This furthers the division of labor. The specialization of labor increases productivity, which increases personal wealth, which increases the options available for service—maybe not the worker's, but surely the missionary families he supports through his tithe and offerings. It was a young Karl Marx, not God, who laid down this rule: "...in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic."[11] This view of economic production is opposed to the idea of specialization of production and the division of labor.

C. Christian Stoicism

Paul is arguing that this world is not trustworthy. It is passing away. The proper emotional attitude toward a world in which the time is short, Paul says, is to go about one's asctivities as if the environment that makes possible the good things of life is insecure. "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and

10. Chapter 8.

11. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, [1845–46] 1965), pp. 44–45.

they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away" (vv. 29–31). This sounds like Stoicism: a patient emotional acceptance of the good and the bad.

How can a man with a wife live and think as though he were single? How can men weep or rejoice, yet do so as if they did not? How can someone buy goods, yet live as someone with no possessions? Paul does not explain any of this, here or elsewhere. Nevertheless, he says that the Corinthians must do all of these things, "for the fashion of this world passeth away." There is no reason for a Christian not to enjoy his wife or his possessions, Paul says, but he is told to live as though he could lose both at a moment's notice. He could lose his life, too. This was Solomon's attitude in Ecclesiastes.

> Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them (Eccl. 9:9–12).[12]

Solomon's final sentence indicates that a man can pass away at any time. Paul says that the fashion of this world is passing away. Yet the world is still here. So, Paul must have meant that, as far as an individual is concerned, this world passes away, for all men pass away. A man's time is short. The world's time, compared to a man's time, has been long.

What does a short life span have to do with the advantages of not marrying? If every man's time is short, then "the present distress" had nothing to do with this universal condition. If time had been uniquely short for members of the Corinthian church, then it might have made sense for a man to avoid the added responsibility of a family. But there is no indication in the text or in the historical record that Corinth was suffering or about to suffer anything unique.

12. Gary North, *Autonomy and Stagnation: An Economic Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 34.

On the contrary, Corinth was in a strong financial position to send money to the hard-pressed church in Jerusalem (II Cor. 9).[13] If Paul had in mind the coming persecution of all the churches, still a decade away, then he would have warned other churches, offering the same marital advice. He did not do this in his epistles that have survived. If he was concerned about the imminent passing of the Old Covenant order, this was no threat to gentile churches. Besides, he referred to the present distress, not the distress of Jerusalem a decade or more in the future. So, what was he talking about?

Is his advice universal? If so, then the present distress must be universal. If the present distress is the transitory nature of this life, then his advice regarding marriage is at odds with the dominion covenant: multiplication. One of two conclusions is inescapable. First, the present distress (need), whatever it was, was unique to Corinth, and this led Paul to offer the local congregation marital advice that was different from what the creation ordinances required: marriage (Gen. 2:24) and multiplication (Gen. 1:28). Second, the present distress is a universal condition, namely, the insecurity of life, in which case, he was non-authoritatively recommending a celibacy as a superior way of life, a way of life that cannot become universal without annulling the pre-Fall dominion covenant and its renewal with Noah's family (Gen. 9:1–3).[14] This would mean that Paul was recommending an elitist way of Christian living based on the absence of the sex drive. It would be convenient to affirm the first possibility—a unique situation at Corinth—but the evidence from the text points to the latter. F. W. Grosheide comments: "The reference is not to a need which was only present in Paul's own days nor to an imminent coming of the Lord whereby life on earth would lose its significance. Paul speaks in this chapter of the needs of all Christians in general (cf. v. 29 and 31). He has in view the distress which exists for every Christian at all times."[15] Conclusion: if the present distress is universal, then his recommendation is elitist.

Adults today face approximately the same time on earth that adults in Paul's day did. The life span of modern Western man is not much different from the typical life span in Moses' day. "The days of our

13. Gary North, *Ethics and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on the Epistles* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 7.

14. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1982] 2012), ch. 18.

15. F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1953), p. 175.

years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Ps. 90:10). Our time is still just about as short today as it was then. So, any difference in life expectancy facing the Corinthian church's members and what we face is not significant—surely not significant enough to recommend marriage today and recommend against it in Paul's day.

We are faced with a major explanatory problem: figuring out why Paul is so emphatic here that Christians should not marry because of "the present distress," when it was the same general distress faced by mankind from Moses' day until today.

D. Paul's Defense of Celibacy

Paul suggests that taking on additional responsibilities in family life is not wise unless a person just cannot live comfortably outside of marriage. This attitude toward marriage, if extended to the institutional church, would undermine the kingdom of God. If every church member were called to be a wandering evangelist, as Paul was, the church would turn into something like the medieval friars. But the friars existed only through the charity of Christian families. That the church can use a few evangelists who are constantly on the move is obvious. That the church cannot use many of them is also obvious.

Marriage is the main topic in this passage. Paul also discussed the calling. He seemed to regard marriage as being an inferior calling, a product of most men's lack of God's special gift of no interest in sex, a gift which Paul said he had been given. Yet, overwhelmingly, the Old Covenant had favored marriage, beginning with the command to Adam to be fruitful and multiply. This is why this passage baffles commentators. Why would Paul spend so much space in praise of celibacy, when celibacy is a rare condition which, if distributed universally, would end mankind, and if distributed widely, would impoverish humanity by restricting the division of labor? Why would he recommend to Christians an attitude toward marriage that would hand over dominion to those covenant-breakers with large families?

Jesus said that some men are eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom. "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matt. 19:12). I assume that the third variety is spiritual

rather than physical. Christ was not calling men to become Skoptsi, the Russian cult that requires castration. Paul was one of Christ's eunuchs. But the gift of celibacy has to be limited by God if society is to be preserved, let alone extended. Why spend a chapter praising celibacy when celibacy is limited, and must be limited, to a handful of people? My guess is that Paul was defending his own gift and his marital condition. He was calling others to live as he did, if they possessed his gift. "For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that" (v. 7). But why single out widows? Did he expect them to become foreign missionaries, as he was? The practice of sending out unmarried women—not usually widows—began in late-nineteenth-century Protestant missions. This seems to have worked well as far as planting churches was concerned. But even here, there have been problems. Women cannot lawfully speak in church, according to Paul (I Cor. 14:34–35). They surely cannot lawfully be ordained as ministers. So, the lawful missionary efforts of women are limited to teaching, nursing, and support activities.

Paul does not say that widows can serve God better as single women. He says they will be happier. But why do widows generally re-marry when they have the opportunity? Why have they rejected Paul's advice? I have a controversial answer: his personal advice has not applied well to most widows, despite the fact that his language seems all-inclusive. He thought that he was offering good advice to most widows. It makes more sense theologically to assume that Paul's advice here was never meant by God to be permanent.

Conclusion

Paul's initial declaration is crucial for understanding this passage: "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful" (v. 25). He was not offering a command from God. Therefore, his personal preference for celibacy as a superior way of life can be seen as non-binding. Second, "the present distress" seems to refer to mankind's general condition: a short life in an insecure, cursed world. Jacob's confession links him to our era. "And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage" (Gen. 47:9). If the pres-

ent distress is the human condition—life in a temporal world—then this is an affirmation of continuity between the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant. This means that Paul's defense of celibacy as a superior way of life is advice for a highly restricted population. It means that the best way of life is closed to most Christians. I think Paul really believed this. This outlook is elitist, as he knew: most men are not beneficiaries of the gift of celibacy. (Happily married couples rejoice in the fact.) Paul's outlook in this passage has reinforced the doctrine of the celibate priesthood in Roman Catholicism and has also led to the institutional elevation of monks over married clergy in Eastern Orthodoxy. Both denominations have treated Paul's personal, non-binding opinion on bachelorhood as if it were a command from the Lord, which Paul insisted that it was not.

10

MEAT OFFERED TO IDOLS

As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

I CORINTHIANS 8:4

The theocentric focus of this passage idolatry. This is an aspect of point two of the biblical covenant: representation.[1]

A. Idols as Representatives of Demons

An idol is nothing: a lifeless object. Paul calls it dumb: silent. "Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led" (I Cor. 12:2). Yet the Second Commandment indicates that God regards idols as rival gods. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:4–6).[2] This is a strict prohibition against the worship of lifeless objects. But how can a lifeless object be a god? Only through covenantal representation.

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 2. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 2.

2. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 2, *Decalogue and Dominion* (1986), ch. 22.

The Second Commandment is found in the first five commandments, which all have to do with priestly issues. The second five have to do with kingly issues.[3] The Second Commandment is an application of point two of the biblical covenant model. David declared: "For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols: but the LORD made the heavens" (I Chron. 16:25–26). God is above all other gods. But what were these gods? They were not gods. They were either nothing or else they were representations of demons. Hierarchy always implies representation. Who represents God in history? The commandment is clear: idols do not. We must not worship any physical representation of God. This is why prayer to icons of church-designated posthumous saints is prohibited by this commandment. So is kneeling before them.

Paul is adamant here that idols are nothing. That is, they are not the original source of power. They cannot themselves answer prayer. This is a basic Old Covenant doctrine. "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them" (Ps. 115:3–8). Idols represent not only supernatural beings or forces but also the people who worship idols. The people who worship idols are like their idols: impotent. This condemnation rests on the assumption that God will be victorious and will bring judgment against all pretenders to divinity. He is a jealous God.

Then why did people in the ancient world and also in primitive tribes today persist in believing in idols? Because idols represent demons, and demons sometimes offer occult power to men. Paul fully understood this, as he said a few paragraphs later. "What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (I Cor. 10:19–20). There can sometimes be visible benefits from praying to idols and for sacrificing to them. The value of these sacrifices initially seem minimal compared to the power offered through them.

3. *Ibid.*, Preface.

Paul is speaking here of the power of idols in themselves, as was David. They have no power. But this does not mean that they do not serve as representatives of demons who do possess power. This is why Paul forbade participation in idolatrous meals: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (I Cor. 10:21).

B. Unholy Waste: Sacrificing to Idols

God requires sacrifice from His followers. So do demons. But God's command to worship and sacrifice is open to all people. The command to sacrifice to a demon may not be. This is especially true inside oath-bound secret societies or clans.

Paul is writing here of meat offered to idols. Why would this concern a Christian? What opportunity would a Christian have to eat meat offered to an idol, other than at an idolatrous meal, which Paul prohibits? Answer: the meat that was offered to idols sometimes was subsequently offered for sale in the marketplace. The priestly representative of the idol could increase his income by the sale of such meat.

The question arose: Was this meat ritually tainted? Did it constitute false worship to buy something offered for sale by those priestly representatives who had received the idolatrous sacrifices on behalf of an idol? Paul says no. The idol is nothing in this free market context. Here, it does not grant power. Here, it does not command sacrifice. Formerly idolatrous meat that is offered for sale commercially has lost its rival sacramental character, which it had possessed in the context of a ritual meal or offering. The context of ritual eating was crucial to Paul's argument. *The free market had removed the ritually tainted nature of the meat*. The market had made access to the meat universal and without an oath. Thus, Paul writes: "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles [butcher shop], that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (I Cor. 10:25–26). This precedes the section that prohibits participating in ritual meals offered to idols. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. Paul makes it clear that there is nothing wrong with eating meat offered to idols. The market removes all traces of ritual pollution from meat that had been offered to idols.

This principle applied in Paul's day even when a temple was the place where the meat was purchased and eaten, where a Christian could "sit at meat in the idol's temple" (v. 10). Some temples

in Corinth sold their meat and served it on their premises. This was clearly not done during the times of their disciples' celebrations. The meat was sold to be eaten on common ground, not to be offered and then consumed in worship. Paul is clear that there is nothing intrinsically immoral with buying meat offered to idols and then consuming it on the premises of a pagan temple. By opening access to the general public, and by charging a price, the priests had converted their local temples into what we might call "spiritual theme restaurants."

C. Weak Christians and Strong Judaizers

1. Weakness

The problem of weak Christians reappears here. In Romans, Paul dealt with the same problem with respect to prohibited foods. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs" (Rom. 14:1–2).[4] What should a mature Christian do about the concerns of a weak Christian? He should defer to the weak Christian in public activities. "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:14–17).

Christian liberty is valid, but this liberty should not be used to create doubts or guilt in the lives of weak Christians. "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak" (I Cor. 8:9). This is the context of his discussion of eating meat in a temple. "For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (vv. 10–13).

4. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 12.

What is the weak Christian's problem? He does not understand basic theology, namely, that there are no gods other than the biblical God. He does not understand that meat offered to idols is ritually prohibited only within the confines of the sacrificial ritual meal itself. Paul warns us: "Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled" (v. 9).

To what extent must mature Christians change their lifestyles for the sake of weak Christians? Paul's example is the Christian who is seen eating a meal in a pagan temple. His visibility in a public place is what constitutes the threat to a weak Christian. There is no suggestion that whatever a mature Christian eats in private is a threat to anyone's faith. So, Paul is saying to curtail public displays of legitimate liberty in Christ.[5]

2. Theological Blindness

This leads us to a related issue, one which Paul does not raise in this context, but did deal with elsewhere: the stubborn Christian who is impervious to sound doctrine. This "weakness" is really a matter of false interpretation. This is not someone who is new to the faith; this is someone who is familiar with the basic theology of Christian liberty, but who rejects it.

The classic examples of stubborn, heretical Christians in Paul's writing were members of the sect of the circumcision. They were attempting to impose the Mosaic law of circumcision on gentile Christians. He had no patience with them. He called them promoters of another gospel. He told the Galatian church, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6–7). In this context, he returned to the theme of Christian liberty. "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13).

Paul had no patience for the opinions of the circumcisers. He did his best to oppose them publicly. He reported: "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other

5. A related issue is the attitude of weak Christians regarding alcohol. See Appendix B.

Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles" (Gal. 2:11–15). He did not regard the sect of the circumcision as refuge for weak Christians. Their position was wilfully heretical. He told Peter not to alter his lifestyle out of concern for their opinions.

3. Spiritual Immaturity

Paul in this passage has in mind spiritually immature Christians who had not been exposed to accurate theology regarding the liberty of the Christian in Christ. These people were still worried about the Mosaic law's rules governing food and clothing. This passage and the passage in chapter 10 on the right to buy food in a butcher shop make it clear that the prohibitions on eating certain meats, which did not prevail prior to Moses, are hereby annulled. Paul elsewhere warns them: "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh" (Col. 2:20–23). The concern over meat offered to idols was equally misplaced.

Nevertheless, weak Christians are at risk. Their consciences warn them, even when there is no sin involved. So, when asked about what he eats, the mature Christian must be patient. "But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (I Cor. 10:28–33).

Give no one offense: this is a good rule. The problem comes when circumstances dictate that the mature Christian must offend someone in order to avoid giving offense to someone else. When pressured by Judaizers in Antioch, Peter gave offense to the gentiles. Paul warned him not to give offense to the gentiles. This warning necessarily gave offense to the Judaizers. In such cases, Christians must give offense to the legalists.

4. Judaizers

The prohibited meats of the Mosaic law were presumably also a concern of the Judaizers, just as circumcision was. Paul's authorization of meats offered to idols applied equally to meats prohibited by the Mosaic law. Peter had already been told this in his vision in Cornelius' home. "And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven" (Acts 10:13–16). This, we might call a blanket authorization of meats (v. 11).

Judaizers were not weak Christians. They were not Christians at all. They preached another gospel. Paul anathematized them. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8–9). So hostile was Paul to them that he adopted sarcasm as a tool of condemnation: his reference to cutting off. "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. I would they were even cut off which trouble you. For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal. 5:11–15). The key phrase is this: *called unto liberty*. The Judaizers were calling men back into bondage. What had been the road to liberty under the Old Covenant—circumcision—had become the road to serfdom under the New Covenant. Paul told Christians to stay off the road to serfdom. The end of the Old Covenant was at hand.

Conclusion

Christians should avoid walking down the road to serfdom. With respect to meats, the "touch not, taste not, handle not" theology is one road to serfdom. God has removed the "No Trespassing" sign from all biologically edible meats. Ritual sacrifice to idols and the demons they represent was prohibited by Paul (I Cor. 10:21). The ritual context of eating, not the meat, is what establishes the element of profanation.[6]

Weak Christians do not understand this. Neither do the modern cultic equivalents of the Judaizers. Mature Christians are supposed to respect the former and condemn the latter. The road to serfdom for the weak Christian is any violation of his conscience. Mature Christians should avoid giving offense to weak Christians by publicly refusing to participating in an activity considered profane by weak Christians. The reverse is true for dealing with Judaizers. Peter in Antioch avoided giving offense to the Judaizers by publicly withdrawing from the table of the gentiles. This gave offense to the gentiles. Their sensibilities, not the Judaizers' sensibilities, were what was important. Paul therefore condemned Peter.

By passing meat through a market transaction, any trace of pagan ritual is removed from the meat. The public exchange of goods, money for meat and vice versa, de-sacralizes meat that has been of-

6. Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), ch. 21. Cf. North, "The Annulment of the Dietary Laws," *ICE Position Paper*, No. 2 (Nov. 1984), a reprint of my 1970 essay. R. J. Rushdoony's advocacy of the Mosaic laws governing unclean meats undermined his theology of grace. John Calvin took a strong stand against any revival of the Mosaic Covenant's dietary laws. "As touching meats, after the abrogating of the law, God pronounceth that they are all pure and clean. If, on the other side, there start up a mortal man, making a new difference, forbidding certain, he taketh unto himself the authority and power of God by sacrilegious boldness. Of this stamp were the old heretics, Montanus, Priscillianus, the Donatists, the Tatians, and all the Encratites. Afterwards the Pope, to the end he might bind all those sects in a bundle, made a law concerning meats. And there is no cause why the patrons of this impiety should babble that they do not imagine any uncleanness in meats, but that men are forbidden to eat flesh upon certain days, to tame the flesh. For seeing they eat such meats as are most fit, both for delicacy and also for riot, why do they abstain from eating bacon, as from some great offence, save only because they imagine that that is unclean and polluted which is forbidden by the law of their idol? With like pride doth the tyranny of the Pope rage in all parts of life; for there is nothing wherein he layeth not snares to entangle the miserable consciences of men. But let us trust to the heavenly oracle, and freely despise all his inhibitions. We must always ask the mouth of the Lord, that we may thereby be assured what we may lawfully do; forasmuch as it was not lawful even for Peter to make that profane which was lawful by the Word of God." John Calvin, *Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, [1560] 1979), I, pp. 422–23.

fered to idols. Eating such meat is therefore not a profane act. The customer violates no unholy boundary. To cross from common ground into unholy ground constitutes a profane act for Christians. To participate in unholy communion with demons is a profane act for Christians. But this has nothing to do with eating meat that has been sold to the public. The sale removes the unholy element of the meat. The meat needs no special prayer, no holy water, to cleanse it ritually. All it needs is a market.

11

RETAINING THE FRUITS OF OUR LABOR

> *Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.*
>
> I CORINTHIANS 9:7–10

The theocentric principle here is God as the caretaker. He takes care of oxen, and He takes care of His people. This is different from the more familiar description of God as the owner. Ownership is derived from part one of the biblical covenant: sovereignty.[1] Caretaking is an aspect of point two: guarding.[2]

A. Paying Ministers a Salary

The conclusion that Paul reaches is that ministers of the gospel have a moral claim on a portion of the tithes of the members. Paul possesses the same claim, he tells them, but he has chosen not to ask for support.

> If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all

1. Gary North, *Inherit the Earth* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987), ch. 1.
2. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 2. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 2.

> things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel (I Cor. 9:11–14).

This is the same conclusion that he reached in his other citation of this Mosaic law. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward" (I Tim. 5:17–18).[3] Ministers of the gospel perform services that deserve funding by the churches' members.

This conclusion rests on the Mosaic law governing oxen. This obscure law remains binding in the New Testament era. The ox has a legal claim on the field's owner. The ox cannot speak for itself. The authorities must be prepared to intervene on its behalf. This means that someone has a legal obligation before God to intervene on behalf of a muzzled ox and report the infraction to civil or ecclesiastical authorities. This law establishes the legitimacy of private organizations such as the Humane Society and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.[4]

Paul then moves to the more general principle: labor and hire. Here, there is no need for a third party to intervene. The participants are humans. They can bargain with each other regarding appropriate payment for work rendered. There is no legal claim beyond the terms of the contract or agreement because of the humanity of the actors. Similarly with ministers: there is no legal claim. But there is a moral claim. Paul argues that if an ox has a legally enforceable claim on payment from their owners, surely ministers possess a moral claim on church support. But to reach this conclusion, he passes through a more general application of this case law: the laborer is worthy of his hire.

B. Costs and Benefits

Paul begins with a rhetorical question: "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?" The assumption here is that a warrior does not seek his own personal economic advantage when he goes into

3. Gary North, *Hierarchy and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Timothy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), ch. 8.

4. Both organizations have headquarters in the United States.

battle. He is serving the state and, in theory at least, the society that is represented politically by the state. Others in society will benefit from his efforts on the battlefield. He is therefore not asked by the state to pay his personal costs of service to the state. Paul implies here that there is a relationship between gaining a unique personal advantage and bearing the expenses of one's activities. Where there is no unique personal advantage, there should be no personally born expenses.

This implication is reinforced by two more rhetorical questions. "Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" A person who makes an expenditure out of his own assets is entitled to reap the fruits of his labor, his capital, his planning, and his vision.

Paul used rhetorical questions. Why? Because the logic that undergirded his conclusion he regarded as so persuasive that he did not have to spell out and then defend the logical steps in his argument. He expected the reader or listener to be able to perceive the logic of his argument. He also expected the reader to accept the truth of his argument. By comparing the three rhetorical questions, we find a common thread: the relationship between costs and benefits. First, he who does not benefit economically should not bear the economic costs of keeping him on duty. Second, he who bears the costs should also reap the benefits.

"Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?" Paul adds that he is not merely appealing to human reason by means of logic. He implies here that an appeal to logic possesses less authority than an appeal to Scripture. To say something as a man is one thing, but when the Scripture says something that verifies logic, men can legitimately have greater confidence in what is being said. Paul appeals to logic by means of rhetorical questions, but his appeal to Scripture possesses greater authority, he implies.

C. Plowing in Hope

"Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn" (Deut. 25:4). This Mosaic law protected the ox's interests. The ox was entitled to be fed by the field that he had previously plowed.[5] Paul adds: "For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope" (v. 10). Like the ox, so is the producer who allocates

5. Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1999] 2012), ch. 63.

resources to produce a finished good or service in the future. Because he has invested time, raw materials, money, and labor into the project, including a plan of production, he is entitled to benefit from his investment. This is his hope. It is a biblically legitimate hope. It is why he made the investment in the first place. His original hope was his motivation for his subsequent productivity. This hope may be thwarted by unforeseen events, but from a legal standpoint, it is based on the concept that the laborer is worthy of his hire, that the fruits of his labor, time, capital, and money are his.

This is the great hope, when defended by the courts, that has produced the West's free market economy, with its enormous per capita wealth.[6] It is a hope secured by civil law: property rights. Property rights are enforceable legal claims for an owner to use his resources in ways determined best by him and for him. Most important, an owner has the legal right to exclude others from using his property, just as God excluded Adam from the forbidden tree. He can legally sell this right permanently or rent it to others temporarily. This view of property is the basis of the eighth commandment: "Thou shalt not steal" (Ex. 20:15).[7] It also is the basis of the tenth commandment. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's" (Ex. 20:17).[8] It is also the basis of other Mosaic laws.

1. Property Rights

In a book-long defense of private property, Roman Catholic social commentator Tom Bethell linked property rights and Christianity. Christianity defends the justice of private ownership.

> Rights may be defined as "just claims," but in relation to the state, they refer to aspects of the human person that belong to us in consequence of our nature. If we are deprived of them without due process, injustice is done. The rise of the doctrine of rights is a facet of the slow democratization of life in the West, and may owe its origin to the influence of Christianity. "All equal are within the Church's gate," George Herbert wrote. The privileges of rank will not carry weight on Judgment Day—they may turn out to be a disadvantage, in fact. This theological insight was by degrees transported

6. Douglas C. North and Robert Paul Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

7. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 2, *Decalogue and Dominion* (1986), ch. 28.

8. *Ibid.*, ch 30.

> into the secular realm: All men were created equal, and although individual men might differ greatly in the "content of their character," in their talents and in their aptitudes, they should be presumed equal in their rights, and should be treated equally by the law.

The argument here is that it is self-defeating to talk of protecting individual rights if the right to own property is not prominent among them. At the most general level, the phrase "life, liberty, and property" does outline our most fundamental rights. As an eighteenth-century Virginian (Arthur Lee) said: "The right of property is the guardian of every other right, and to deprive a people of this is in fact to deprive them of their liberty." This truth became obscured in the twentieth century, especially in the period of false hopes for collectivism. It is imperative that it be revived today.[9]

An individual who possesses *legal title* to specific property is burdened with *legal responsibilities* for the use of this property. God holds him responsible for the use of his property. So does the civil government. For example, he may not physically injure others with it. Society also holds the owner responsible through the free market's bidding process. At all times, there are competing bids for the use of scarce resources. The owner or the renter of property pays a price—forfeited income—whenever he refuses to sell this property or allow others to pay him to use it. This is a cost imposed on him by other market participants. There is no escape from this responsibility of ownership. It passes to the new owner along with lawful title.

When an owner decides to use a particular resource as an input in some production process, he thwarts the desires of competing producers who are bidding for this resource. The owner then allocates this property on behalf of future customers, possibly including himself, who will want the final product to solve their problems or fulfill their dreams. The owner decides to use the asset in a particular way. This excludes other ways. Someone must accept this allocational responsibility in society. If the asset is to be put to its highest and best use, someone with legal authority over the asset must decide which use is highest and best. In a free market social order, the owner makes this decision. He is legally sovereign over the asset. He possesses legal title to it. By legally linking (a) title to an asset and the income it generates with (b) full economic responsibility for any physical dam-

9. Tom Bethell, *The Noblest Triumph: Property and Prosperity Through the Ages* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998), pp. 169–70.

ages imposed by the asset (Ex. 21:28–32,[10] 35–36;[11] Ex. 22:5–6[12]), the Bible necessarily promotes a free market economy: the private ownership of both the means of production and the fruits of production. The Bible is not neutral toward the free market. It provides a blueprint for establishing a free market economy.[13] This is why Christian opponents of a free market economy vehemently deny that the Bible provides blueprints for any economic system. They know that the Old Testament condemns their anti-market views.

2. Costs of Protection

A civil government is supposed to protect every individual under its jurisdiction. Individuals should be defended by the state against fraud or coercion by others who seek to take possession of the existing owners' assets. The higher the risk of theft for any item, the greater the value of scarce resources that are necessary to protect ownership rights. This reduces the supply of high-risk items that are unprotected by civil law.

The costs of protecting assets take many forms. These costs reduce the producer's net income. He therefore produces fewer goods than he would have, had the threats not existed, or had the state defended his right of ownership more effectively. These costs may persuade him to raise the selling price, thereby reducing the number of potential buyers. The excluded buyers are harmed. The seller is harmed, too: reduced sales and income. Or, the owner may lose control over the item when a thief is successful. These economic effects hurt the customer. They also hurt the producer. The end result is reduced production, as producers allocate resources to protection instead of production. This lowers the wealth of individuals and also of society. The thief is benefitted, but his benefit leads to reduced wealth for productive, honest people.

The thief may be the state. In our day, the state's level of taxation and its degree of regulatory control over the production process[14]

10. North, *Authority and Dominion*, Part 3, *Tools of Dominion* (1990), ch. 40.
11. *Ibid.*, ch. 42.
12. *Ibid.*, ch. 44.
13. North, *Inherit the Earth*.
14. James Bovard wrote two books on regulatory outrages by the United States government. *Lost Rights: The Destruction of American Liberty* (New York: St. Martins, 1994); *"Feeling Your Pain": The Explosion & Abuse of Government Power in the Clinton-Gore Years* (New York: St. Martins, 2000). On the background to this loss of liberty, see Bovard, *Freedom in Chains: The Rise of the State and the Demise of the Citizen* (New York: St. Martins, 1999).

make it the most effective thief in man's history. The level of theft is literally beyond calculation. Producers and customers labor under the burden of confiscation of half or more of their output. The loss imposed by the state's theft is more predictable than the loss imposed by a private thief. This makes its burden a cost of production. It become more manageable because of its predictability. But the burden is enormous.

D. The Ownership of Inputs and Output

Output requires inputs. This is a law of economic scarcity. We cannot get something for nothing. A man looks at his options, and concludes, "If I want something that I can consume or sell, I must first produce something from the resources that are available to me." He looks at what is available, and he then attempts to forecast the future. He asks: "What will someone be willing to pay me in exchange for my output? What will it cost me to produce this output? Will it produce a gain or a loss?" Then he decides whether the project is worth pursuing.

If he must assemble resources over time in order to gain control over future output, he wants legal protection for whatever it is that he produces. If he spends time and resources in producing an item that is then taken from him without warning, he becomes a loser. He has worked, unpaid, for someone else. He has sown, but another has harvested the crop. Paul says that no rational person will do this. "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" (v. 7). An individual expends resources in planting a vineyard or feeding a flock of animals. He expects to gain a reward for his efforts. There is nothing immoral about a person's desire to gain a positive net return from an expenditure of scarce resources, including time. This is normal. It is sufficiently normal that Paul uses these examples as evidence of what rational people do.

Logical as this sounds, Paul is not content here to appeal solely to human logic. He invokes biblical law: "Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?" (v. 8). The biblical law in question is this one: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn" (Deut. 25:4).[15] On the surface, this is an obscure, narrowly

15. North, *Inheritance and Dominion*, ch. 62.

constrained law, yet Paul invokes it here and also in his first epistle to Timothy (I Tim. 5:17–18).[16] This principle of morally legitimate compensation is at the heart of the free market economy. It is not wrong to seek a reward for one's labors, any more than it is wrong for a working ox to seek food on the job.

God has assigned to mankind a task: to subdue the earth as God's agent. This task mandates fruitfulness. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28).[17] Mankind is supposed to add value to God's creation. Each individual is supposed to add value to whatever God has entrusted to him. This is what it means to be a profitable servant.

How does a producer add value? By altering resources in such a way that they better meet the desires of customers. How does he know when he has done this? Whenever customers pay him more to buy his output than it cost him to produce it. An exception to this rule of thumb for estimating profitability may be the profitable sale of a good or service to the civil government. The producer has created value for himself, but at the expense of taxpayers, some of whom are less well off because of these costs. Others, however, may be benefited. This raises the complex issue of social costs.[18]

My main point here is this: *there is an imputation of final economic value by customers*. Only after a producer has sold his output can he know whether he has added value in the eyes of customers. If he has not made a return on his investment equal to the value of all the inputs, including the income he could otherwise have earned as a salaried worker, and also the interest payment for time that his capital might otherwise have earned, then he has subtracted value: the forfeited income of the scarce economic resources that he used to produce the goods he offered for sale.

Conclusion

The delegated goal of all economic activity is to add value to God's creation. A legitimate motivation for working to add value is to secure the added value for oneself. God requires a tithe of 10% of the

16. Gary North, *Hierarchy and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Timothy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: [2001] 2012, ch. 8.

17. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, ch. 4.

18. North, *Authority and Dominion*, Appendix H.

net increase in income. Beyond this, a producer lawfully retains the surplus. He must pay taxes, but total taxes must be limited to less than 10% of net income (I Sam. 8:15, 17).[19]

Value hoped for leads to productive activities: men's re-structuring of the creation. These re-structuring activities may or may not result in value added to society. The free market allows customers to determine whether or not they regard these activities, in retrospect, as having added value. Customers determine this by buying or not buying the output of the production process at prices that generate revenues sufficient to compensate the producer for his expenditures.

The legal right to bid is the customer's tool of economic authority. Making bids is how customers gain their ends. They are legally authorized to make bids, and anyone who rejects a bid suffers an economic loss: whatever was bid and was then turned down. He may then decide to consume whatever he owns, but he cannot do this at zero price. He forfeits something: ownership of whatever was bid.

In order to encourage men to devote the time, money, risk, and planning required to produce for future customers, the Bible establishes a legal and moral principle: the ox is not to be muzzled when he treads out the corn. This Mosaic legal principle means that the laborer is worthy of his hire (I Tim. 5:18) and the plowman should plow in hope (I Cor. 9:10). It means that privately owned property must be respected by individuals and their representative institutions. There is no eleventh commandment: "Thou shalt not steal, except by majority vote."

19. Gary North, *Disobedience and Defeat: An Economic Commentary on the Historical Books* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 14.

12

RUNNING THE RACE

> *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*
>
> I CORINTHIANS 9:24–27

The theocentric issue here is reward: sanctions, point four of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. For the Sake of a Prize

No one enters a race to lose it, unless he has been paid to lose. A gambler would pay a favored athlete to lose a race. So would a rich relative of the man expected to come in second. But no one on his own authority suffers the years of training required to win a race, and then runs to lose. He runs with all of his strength.

Paul says that the person seeks a reward: the prize. The prize may be merely a cheap piece of metal or a cheap ribbon. The reward represents the victory. It is a public testimony to the owner's position, at a particular place and time, as the best performer.

There is a payoff for victory. The athlete does not run a race merely for the joy of running. He could run on his own, without a crowd

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 4.

watching. He would not risk the agony of defeat[2] for the sake of glory. But there would be no acclaim.

The idea that biblical ethics is not grounded in public acclaim is nonsense. At the heart of the Christian life is the desire for reward. This reward is not exclusively earthly. The final payoff is beyond the grave at the final judgment. There are the equivalents of precious metals and jewels to be received. There is also the possibility of wood, hay, and stubble (I Cor. 3:12–15).[3] This will be public: "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it" (3:13a). This will not be revealed in private. The goal is an incorruptible crown (v. 25). Incorruptible wealth is available only after death, when covenant-keepers receive their incorruptible bodies."For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:53).

Paul tells his listeners that the Christian walk is not a walk: it is a run. There is no time to spare. There is no strength to spare. This is consistent with what he told the church at Rome: this is a time for maximum sacrifice: the whole of our lives (Rom. 12:1–2).[4]

B. Training to Win

"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection" (v. 27a). This is a matter of self-discipline. As a disciple of Christ, Paul imposed self-discipline. As a representative of Christ, he sacrificed the good things of life, as interpreted by the pagan world. He suffered for the gospel's sake. This was the cost of discipleship.

This is no doctrine of "think and grow rich."[5] This is not "name it and claim it."[6] This is a lifetime of hard work and personal self-sacrifice.

---

2. The phrase "agony of defeat" comes from a weekly American television show, *Wide World of Sports*, the first mass audience sports show. A ski jumper became the visual incarnation of the agony of defeat: youtube.com/watch?v=P2AZH4FeGsc (accessed January 16, 2021). Decades later, the show did a detailed look at how this video was made: youtube.com/watch?v=n_ZvwIFbXMM (accessed January 16, 2021). The word "Agony" comes from the Greek word *agonia*. It referred to war and sports. It was at the heart of classical Greek culture. Jacob Burkhardt, *The Greeks and Greek Civilization* (New York: St. Martins, [1872] 1999), Book II, Ch. III.

3. Chapter 3.

4. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 8.

5. This is the title of a personal success manual that sold by the millions in the United States.

6. This is the slogan of a heretical movement within charismatic Christianity, sometimes called "positive confession." It is very popular in the poverty-stricken third world. Its emphasis is on mental contortions of faith in great personal wealth, not on planning, thrift, education, and a lifetime of hard work.

The philosopher Immanuel Kant argued that ethics, if valid, must not seek personal rewards from ethical action. "But if we do good because of the advantage or pleasure which we derive from the act, the ground of impulse is not moral. Virtue is good in itself and does not need false support."[7] This position is anti-Christian to the core.

Paul tells his listeners that the Christian life is strenuous. It need not be physically strenuous, although Paul's was, which he informed the church in his second letter (II Cor. 11:23–27). But whether physical or not, the faithful Christian is expected by God to work hard in order to be a good servant. He should work as hard as an athlete trains.

C. Earthly Rewards

This brings us to a controversial topic. There can be no doubt that Paul worked for a public reward. He said so plainly. But this does mot mean that he worked for an earthly reward. His experience of persecution (I Cor. 11:23–27) testifies otherwise. He did not go through that as a way to increase his wealth.

Here, the Mosaic Covenant is relevant. Societies experience positive external sanctions in terms of their faithfulness in obeying biblical law (Lev. 26, Deut. 28). The Book of Job rests on the long-term predictability of personal covenant sanctions in history.[8] To argue that thereis a radical discontinuity between historical sanctions and eternal sanctions is a denial of the continuity of the Bible, Old Covenant to New Covenant. The Old Covenant had no clear doctrine of final judgment and reward. It makes no sense to argue that the New Covenant reversed the system of sanctions in the Mosaic Covenant. God has given additional revelation. *Historical sanctions are a testimony to eternal sanctions*. The church will not snatch victory out of the jaws of defeat at the end of time. The church will participate in the extension of the civilization of Christ, which is the meaning of the kingdom of Christ.

Amillinnialism teaches otherwise. So does dispensational premillennialism with respect to the dispensation of the church.[9] This is why both eschatological systems are mute with respect to social

7. Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics* (New York: Harper Torchbooks [1780–81], 1963), p. 75.

8. Gary North, *Predictability and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Job* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012).

9. Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

theory, including economic theory. They cannot identify any New Testament social sanctions. This was mandatory under the Mosaic Covenant. They have not devised explicitly biblical theories of social order. So, they deny that any theory of Christian society or social order is valid. They all commit to political pluralism.[10]

The idea that Christians must content themselves with internal victory over sin, but tolerate defeat for the kingdom of God in history, has led to three centuries orms of compromise with the existing world order. Christians have settled for a temporary cease-fire with the humanists. It is clear that this is not possible with Islam, but not until the twenty-first century has this awareness penetrated the thinking of Christians.[11] They perceive that Islam does not want compromise with Western secular culture. It therefore wants no compromise with Christians who have compromised with humanist culture.

Conclusion

Paul's metaphor of the Christian life as race points to victory. It points to victory in history when it is informed by the system of social sanctions outlined in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

Both amillennialism and premillennialism deny that such a system of sanctions exists in the New Covenant. They do not defend this exegetically. They do not offer a biblically developed hermeneutic that establishes the case for such a discontinuity between the covenants. They merely assert it. In doing so, they undermine any attempt to create explicitly biblical social theory, including Christian economics.

10. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), chaps. 3–5.

11. For Americans, the events of September 11, 2001, were the turning point: the hijacked airliners crashed into the twin towers of New York City.

13

THE POLITICS OF PLUNDER

Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

I CORINTHIANS 10:24

The theocentric principle here is service to God through service to other people. This is point two of the biblical covenant: hierarchy.[1]

A. Prohibited Feasts

The tenth chapter of First Corinthians deals with temptation. The key verse is verse 13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." The next verse applies this command to a specific sin: idolatry. "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."

Christians participate in the Lord's Supper. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (v. 16). In this, Christians attain ecclesiastical unity. "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (v. 17). Participation in a ritual meal bonds the participants with the supernatural being in whose name or honor the meal is being celebrated. "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" (v. 18).

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 2. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 2.

The issue of applied ethics here is the offering of sacrifices to idols, which represent devils. "What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (vv. 19–20). The idol is nothing in itself. Paul has insisted on this previously. "As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one" (I Cor. 8:4).[2] What *is* something, however, is a devil who is represented by an idol, and ultimately, the system of supernatural, covenant-breaking power in which devils participate. So, the participant must choose which feast represents the one true God: the idolatrous feast or the Lord's Supper. Paul warns: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (v. 21). Then he asks two rhetorical questions. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" (v. 22). We must not make him jealous. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Ex. 20:4–5).[3]

Then comes a famous statement: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not" (v. 23). What is he speaking about? Is he saying that it is lawful for him to participate in idolatrous feasts, but merely inexpedient? No, because he has already prohibited such participation, not on the basis of expedience, but on the basis of avoiding God's jealousy. The second commandment also prohibits idolatry for the same reason. Then what is he speaking about? He is speaking about eating meat that has been offered to idols. "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles [butcher shops], that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (vv. 25–26). A Christian is also entitled to attend a common social feast hosted by a covenant-breaker. "If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast,

2. Chapter 10.

3. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 2, *Decalogue and Dominion* (1986), ch. 22.

and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake" (v. 27). This is an aspect of Christian liberty. But Christian liberty has self-imposed limits.

> But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? (vv. 28–29)

This is the context of verse 24: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." The translators inserted the word *wealth*. Paul had in mind wealth in the broadest sense: well-being or welfare. He says that each Christian is to seek another person's good or benefit.

B. Personal Gain Through Ritual Subordination

Paul tells his readers that they may lawfully eat meat that has already been offered to idols. They may not lawfully eat meat while it is being offered to idols. What is the difference? Answer: the presence or absence of the element of ritual sacrifice. When men exchange money for meat, they are not involved in sacramental rites. They are merely seeking to assuage their hunger. They must give up something in order to gain something in voluntary exchange. When they attend a social feast, they eat meat that has been purchased by their hosts for money. In contrast, when men offer meat to idols, and then partake of this sacramental meat, they are not seeking to assuage their hunger. This is why Paul tells Christians to eat before they attend the Lord's Supper: so that they will not be hungry at the communion meal (I Cor. 11:21–22). Similarly, in their covenant meals, covenant-breakers ritually confirm a demonic covenant in acts of covenant renewal. Participation in such pagan meals is prohibited to covenant-keepers.

What do sacrificial offerings have to do with seeking personal gain? The motivation of the participant is either to gain positive sanctions from the god to whom the meat is offered, or else to avoid the god's negative sanctions. The sacrificer's goal in either case is self-centered. The participant invokes the name of the idol in an attempt to secure a personal advantage.

The sacrificer surrenders something in his quest for personal gain. He offers something of value to an idol: public subordination. This is of value to the devil represented by the idol because it is a covenant-breaking act. This was the original sin of Adam. The participant

in the demonic festival offers sacrifice under the officiating authority of the idol's priestly agents. We know this because these agents subsequently sell the meat to the general public. This was the issue confronting Paul. "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles [butcher shop], that eat, asking no question for conscience sake" (v. 25).

There was nothing wrong with buying meat from a middleman who operated in between a pagan feast and the buyer. Not all of the meat was consumed at the feast. The excess meat was then sold by the priest to a specialist in meat sales. This act removed the meat's unholy status. It was even legal to eat in the temple's public restaurant (I Cor. 8:10).[4] What was wrong was offering anything to the idol during a covenantal feast that sought aid from the supernatural being represented by the idol. This act of ritual subordination affirmed the power of devils by way of idols. This affirmation is what Paul prohibits.

C. The Re-allocation of Wealth

To sacrifice to an idol is to invoke the authority of devils to impose their sanctions in history. But there is nothing wrong, Paul says, with buying meat from the priests of idols. This is a transaction based on the principle of value for value. The exchange does not invoke supernatural power.

How does a devil reward his worshippers? He must intervene in history to provide them with something that they believed that they could not buy through their own productivity. The sacrificer turns to supernatural power as a way to attain his goals at a below-market price. He seeks to gain something of greater value to him than the value of the asset sacrificed to the idol.

A devil is not originally creative. Only God is originally creative. A devil cannot grant favors in a world of cursed scarcity without re-allocating assets from existing owners to new owners. He cannot autonomously offer something for nothing, or something of value for something of less value. To offer anything to his followers, he must first steal it. Satan is a thief and a squatter. He confiscated Adam's inheritance through his successful deception of Eve (I Tim. 2:14) and his successful temptation of Adam. Whatever he possesses, he possesses only by God's common grace[5] or by prior theft, temptation, or deception.

4. Chapter 10.

5. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 1.

By invoking the power of devils, the sacrificer calls on them to re-allocate assets, including power, away from what God and God's social order have established as lawful. The sacrificer asks a devil or devils to overcome the results of the operations of God's common-grace social order, which is a private property-based order. He seeks his own ends at the expense of others in society, and he expects a devil to provide this. To the degree that the sacrificer's prayers are answered, wealth moves from covenant-keepers to covenant-breakers, or from productive covenant-breakers to less productive covenant-breakers. Under such a system, the wealth of the just is laid up for the sinner. This thwarts God's social order. "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just" (Prov. 13:22).[6]

The sacrificer seeks to become the recipient of coercive wealth redistribution. He appeals to a devil through an idol to act on his behalf because of his sacrifice. He gives up something of market value—meat and time—to gain something of so much greater market value, that whatever he offers in exchange could not have purchased whatever it is that he seeks. He seeks his own wealth at the expense of someone else. He cares nothing about the loss that will be suffered by others in the hoped-for redistribution of wealth. He seeks his own gain at their expense.

Paul is implicitly saying here that it is not just the participation in unholy feasts that is wrong. He is saying that the mental attitude behind participation in this feast is also wrong. The participant seeks his own goals at the expense of others. He implicitly seeks to make it more difficult for others to attain their goals. This is not legitimate, Paul says. This is not the way of personal sacrifice. It is the way of coercing others to sacrifice for the benefit of the ritual feast's participants.

D. With Whose Assets?

Paul tells covenant-keepers to offer a very valuable sacrifice to God. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).[7] One way to do this

6. Gary North, *Wisdom and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Proverbs*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2007] 2012), ch. 41.

7. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 7.

is to sacrifice some degree of your personal comfort for the sake of greater comfort of others. You forfeit what could have been yours for the sake of benefiting others. You re-allocate your wealth on behalf of others.

This is not the way of the world. The familiar practice is for men to seek their own ends at the expense of others. This is the heart of pagan sacrifice. Pagan sacrifice should be cut off at the root, not just at the branch. Covenant-keepers are to sacrifice to God on behalf of others, just as Christ did for covenant-keepers. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5–8).[8]

This is what charity is all about: sacrificing one's own wealth on behalf of others, asking nothing from them in return. There is nothing coercive about this. The person who aids another by means of what belongs to him has not used power to redistribute other men's wealth on behalf of the recipient. In this sense, the sacrificer has not imitated Satan, who always uses evil to gain the assets that he then provides to his followers or to those covenant-keepers who have been deceived by him or his covenant-breaking subordinates.

An ethical problem may arise when someone decides to act on behalf of others, but not through the use of his own assets. He decides that someone else is deserving of support or aid of some kind. He decides that someone should sacrifice for the sake of this third party. He decides that this unnamed someone who should sacrifice is someone other than himself, or at least someone in addition to himself. If he appeals to the sense of charity in someone else, inviting him to join in a righteous cause of self-sacrifice, there is no coercion involved. There is no violation of ownership rights: the eighth commandment. But if the joint-sacrificer is compelled by threat of violence—legal or illegal—to sacrifice on behalf of another person, then the organizer of the "campaign to seek other's wealth" has violated the eighth commandment. "Thou shalt not steal" (Ex. 20:15).[9] Notice that this command does not say, "Thou shalt not steal, except by majority vote."

8. Gary North, *Ethics and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on the Epistles* (Dallas, Georgia: Point five Press, 2012), ch. 20.

9. North, *Authority and Dominion*, ch. 28.

Democracy degenerates into the politics of plunder when groups of voters ally with other groups in order to confiscate wealth from still another group and transfer it to yet another group—or maybe to themselves. This strategy is a system of buying votes from those who receive the plunder. This concept of democracy is the politics of two wolves and a sheep who vote on what to have for dinner.

Far more important than openly seeking to buy votes from the groups that receive the political plunder, this system of democracy is motivated by the goal of subtly buying votes from successful people who seek to assuage their consciences through helping the afflicted, not merely with their own money, but with other people's money. These would-be sacrificers understand that an appeal to voluntary sacrifice on behalf of others will rarely produce as much money as the threat of violence imposed by the civil government. Through politics or, in the United States, through the courts, they seek to gain control over the state, which is the only lawful monopoly of violence outside the family's lawful bounds. They adopt the politics of plunder in order to assuage their consciences, to incorporate their vision of a just and righteous social order, and to gain more votes at the next election. Their political goal is to steal from collective Paul to pay to collective Peter, minus about 50% for government handling.

This is what Satan also does. He has no assets of his own. He steals from some in order to reward others. In doing so, he seeks to extend his kingdom, which is based on the violation of all 10 commandments, including the commandment not to steal. The sacrificer at a demonic ritual feast who invokes demonic power in order to gain his own ends is not different in economic principle from the voter who subordinates himself to the state in order to gain his own ends by using the state's power to extract wealth from others. The devil is expected by the sacrificer to intervene in history on his behalf. So is the state expected by the voter to intervene on his behalf. A devil owns nothing that he has not confiscated from others, either through an appeal to sin, or the threat of violence, or the use of deception. The state, unlike a devil, possesses legitimate though limited authority and therefore legitimate limited power, but when it arrogates additional power to itself in order to use this power to redistribute wealth from one group to another, it has adopted the politics of plunder, which is in accord with Satan's view of his kingdom.

Conclusion

"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth" (v. 24). This is not a call to use state power to benefit the helpless, or, what is far more common in modern democracies, to benefit the middle class, which is the income group that most of the confiscated wealth actually subsidizes.[10] Rather, this is a call for sacrificial giving on the part of the listeners. It is a call for them to extend God's kingdom through voluntary sacrifice. It is not a call for them to organize politically to extend Satan's kingdom by the coercive redistribution of wealth owned by covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers alike.

"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." If taken out of context, this verse could be interpreted as advocating universal theft and violence. If we are to seek another person's wealth for ourselves, why not steal? After all, stealing certainly is a way to seek another person's wealth! But this is not what Paul was advocating. He was advocating sacrificial giving, not universal theft.

The righteous system of ethics that undergirds this passage—seeking first the welfare of others—has been twisted by modern communists, socialists, and statists to mean that the state should use the threat of violence in order to redistribute privately owned wealth. This view of state power has produced the modern world's officially democratic system of universal plunder. Private citizens are not encouraged by statists to steal from other individuals. Instead, they are encouraged to band together politically and use the voting booth as a way to establish a system of universal theft. Statists justify this practice in the name of "economic democracy." They do this officially on behalf of the poor, the downtrodden, and the oppressed. They mimic Satan, the cosmic thief, for they, like he, gain access to the wealth necessary to subsidize other people's goals by means of deception, temptation, and force.

10. Consider the modern tax-funded educational system. It is a subsidy mainly to the middle class. Poverty-stricken students rarely attend colleges and universities, and fewer still graduate. The rich pay the highest percentage of taxes that support the state. Most of the income tax revenues are generated by taxes on the top 20% of income recipients.

14

FULL-TIME CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

I CORINTHIANS 10:31

The theocentric principle here is the glory of God. This is an aspect of point one of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. All of Life as Glorification

Paul tells the Corinthians that all of their activities should glorify God. This does not mean that any of their activities would not ultimately glorify God. The glorification of God is an inescapable concept. It is never a question of glorifying God vs. not glorifying God. It is always a question of *how* one glorifies God: by obedience or disobedience. First, God is presently being glorified by His creation, which testifies to His existence. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).[2] Second, all people will ultimately glorify God by bowing to His son, Jesus Christ. Paul wrote elsewhere: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Phil. 2:10).[3]

---

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 1. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 1.

2. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 1.

3. Gary North, *Ethics and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on the Epistles* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 20.

The crucial personal question is this: Will an individual publicly bow to Christ prior to the final judgment, or only at the final judgment? Paul told the church at Rome that Christians are required in this life to acknowledge that they must bow to Christ on judgment day, and then conduct themselves accordingly. "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:8–12).

God is publicly glorified by His people in history, and He will be publicly glorified by all people at the final judgment, when every knee will bow. At the final judgment, God will publicly divide mankind into sheep (covenant-keepers) and goats (covenant-breakers). "And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left" (Matt. 25:33). Both groups must publicly glorify Him then, but they will receive separate eternal sanctions. The sheep will receive positive eternal sanctions, while the goats will receive negative eternal sanctions.[4]

Paul warned members of the church at Rome to avoid judging each other, because God will judge them all. He was not speaking of formal judgment in a church court. He was speaking of personal judgments regarding non-judicial infractions. The fourth point of the covenant relates to judgment and sanctions.[5] Paul reminded his readers in Rome that God's final judgment will be sufficient to settle the non-judicial infractions in history.

God will judge all men finally, demanding and receiving honor as both Creator and Judge. In the meantime, everything in the creation necessarily glorifies God. He is being glorified as cosmic Judge: the bringer of sanctions. He brings sanctions in history (Deut. 28).[6] The distinguishing issue in history, as in the final judgment, is the nature of these sanctions: positive or negative. Through His sanctions, God

4. On the final judgment, see Appendix A.

5. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, ch. 4.

6. Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1999] 2012), ch. 69.

is being glorified today and will be glorified through eternity. His sanctions will never end: positive and negative.

History will culminate in the public glorification of God by the nations. "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone" (Ps. 86:9–10). Is this prophecy eschatological? It may be. We read of nations in Revelation: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:23–27). This cannot refer to history. The book of life has not yet been opened (Rev. 20:12). It does not yet screen access to the city of God. But Old Covenant saints knew almost nothing about the doctrine of eternal life. So, the references in the Psalms seem to be historical. The psalmist expected nations in history to glorify God sometime in the future. So did Micah. Micah's prophecy is clearly historical. It refers to the last days, which began in the New Covenant era (Heb. 1:2). Micah wrote:

> But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it (Micah 4:1–4).

With God's future historical judgment among nations in mind, the psalmist drew a personal conclusion: "Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name

for evermore" (Ps. 86:11–12). The psalmist said that he would praise God and glorify God's name. He began his praise before the nations did. His belief in God's future judgment among the nations led him to praise. God's sanctions are supposed to produce in His followers an impulse to glorify Him.

This Old Covenant perspective on God's glorification by His people is what Paul has in mind in this passage. He knew that all men must glorify God, one way or the other. He calls on his listeners and readers to glorify God self-consciously in history, so that they will not be forced at the final judgment to glorify God by God's external compulsion. *God will inevitably gain His glory in full public view.* It is better for men to glorify Him publicly through positive acts of worship in history than to be forced to glorify Him by imposed acts of submission on judgment day. Better to glorify God through the continuity of worship in history than by the discontinuity of permanent negative sanctions on judgment day.

B. Nothing Is Secular

Paul uses eating and drinking as representative examples of covenant-keeping men's acts of glorification. He does so in a passage that deals with participation in liturgical covenant meals: demonic (Chapter 10) and godly (Chapter 11). Verse 21 of chapter 10 has to do with eating meat offered to idols. Eating meat offered to idols is lawful for covenant-keepers, Paul says here and in chapter 8.[7] The ethical problem arises when this lawful act creates spiritual problems for weak Christians. Mature Christians are not knowingly to give offense to weak Christians. So, he says, Christian liberty must not be abused. "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (v. 33).

1. Praising God

He is not speaking in verse 31 about formal worship. He has already condemned formal participation in demonic communal meals: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (v. 21). So, this reference has to do with what are sometimes referred to as secular activities. But Paul's words indicate that there are no secular activities. Paul is saying that all activities are acts of God's glorification. God

7. Chapter 10.

will finally judge all acts of all mankind. Paul has already mentioned this. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (I Cor. 4:5).[8] All men must praise God. There is no escape from this. The question is: Will a person praise God on the last day under His positive sanctions or His negative sanctions? Will his praise of God be an extension of his life's commitment or a public repudiation of his life's commitment?

The word "secular" refers to non-religious activities. Paul is saying here that there are no non-religious activities. In this sense, the word "secular" is a misnomer, in the same way that the word "autonomous" is a misnomer. *Nothing is secular because nothing is autonomous.* Everything is under God's overall sovereignty and under His hierarchical authority. Everything is judged in terms of God's law. This will be manifested for all to see on the last day. In this sense, *all life is covenantal*: under God's sovereignty, authority, law, sanctions, and final judgment.

This passage is important for reminding covenant-keepers that nothing that they think or do is irrelevant to God. This is because God's word is comprehensive, meaning all-inclusive. Jesus responded to Satan's temptation regarding the transformation of stones into bread by citing the second half of Deuteronomy 8:3, which reads: "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live." The issue that had faced national Israel in the wilderness was the same one that faced Jesus in the wilderness: hunger. Jesus replied to Satan, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4b).[9] The word of God, not food, is central to the life of man. The content of all of the words of men should be structured by all of the words of God. This is because all of the words of men will be judged by the words of God. Jesus later warned His listeners: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36). *All of men's words are relevant because all of God's words are relevant as the cosmic Judge.* Man

8. Chapter 5.

9. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 1.

is made in God's image. His words either conform to God's words or are in opposition to them. All of a man's words are relevant, for they will be finally judged by God. The relevance of a man's words is imputed by God's words: *judicial declaration*.

Paul tells his listeners here that whatever they do, they must do in order to glorify God. Such activities as eating and drinking are specifically subject to this command. Paul brings all of life under a requirement: to glorify God. All things that men do are relevant. This means that all things that men do are under God's comprehensive judgment.

2. Religious vs. Secular: A False Distinction

The familiar distinction between "religious" and "secular" is misleading. It rests on a false assumption, namely, that God has exempted most of life from the requirement to worship Him. This assumption is not merely incorrect; it is defiantly incorrect. All of man's life is worship. Men worship God, or else they worship mammon (Matt. 6:24).[10] They worship the Creator, or else they worship the creation (Rom. 1:18–22).[11] Therefore, Christians are required by God to glorify Him in their common, everyday activities. There are therefore no non-religious activities.

The common distinction between secular activities and religious worship defines worship in two ways: (1) formal participation in corporate rituals; (2) personal prayer—before, during, or after some activity. This definition is not technically incorrect, but its implied assumption is incorrect, namely, that without formal acts of some kind, an act has no element of worship. The definition implies that worshippers choose to impute an element of worship in their activities. Put another way, they impute a religious element to some act. This is true; they do impute religious significance to some act. They are supposed to impute religious significance to every act. That is Paul's message here. The question is this: Does God do this, too? The common assumption today is that he who does not impute such religious value to a physical or mental act has thereby established its secular character for him. If enough people impute a secular character to their actions, these areas of life become secular. There is a kind of implicit democratic theory of secularism operating here. This theory of democratic imputation is incorrect. We live in a theocracy: God rules (*theos* = God; *kratos* = rule).

10. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 14.
11. North, *Cooperation and Dominion*, ch. 1.

Does God impute secular status to anything? Paul implies here that He does not. God holds all men accountable for everything they do. Christians are therefore required to do everything they do in order to glorify God. They are to reclaim from the humanists' hypothetical realm of secularism everything that God's enemies have defined as irrelevant to God. Everything is relevant to God. Everything is an aspect of the praise of God, the glorification of God, and above all, the judgment of God.

In Psalm 147, we read: "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them" (vv. 19–20). God's special revelation to the nation of Israel set that nation apart covenantally under the Old Covenant. This did not establish a realm of neutrality for the other nations, a neutrality that God exempted from His judgment. Jonah's ministry to Nineveh is proof. Nineveh was under God's law and the law's sanctions. "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). In Psalm 148, we read that nature itself praises (glorifies) God. "Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass" (vv. 1–6). No area of creation is beyond God's judgment. The psalmist here denies the very concept of autonomy and its implication, secularism. *Nature is not neutral. It testifies to the glory of God.* Paul told the church at Rome the same thing. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:18–22).[12]

12. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 1.

C. Everything Is Worship

Paul in these chapters is dealing with true and false corporate worship: covenant meals. In this context, he discusses meals involving meat offered to idols. For the mature Christian, this should not be a problem, except insofar as he might disturb the spiritual lives of weak Christians. Paul then goes to the heart of the matter: the glorification of God. In eating, Christians are supposed to glorify God. They glorify Him by not participating in demonic ritual meals. They also glorify Him by eating meat offered to idols. They glorify Him by refraining from meat offered to idols, when weak Christians' faith is undermined. Finally, in chapter 11, Paul says that Christians are to glorify God by participating lawfully in the Lord's Supper. In all of these activities, Christians are to glorify God.

1. Rival Gods

Everything that men do is an act of worship. Men glorify the god whom they represent covenantally in history. They worship either God or mammon. They worship either the Creator or some aspect of the creation. *There is no covenantally neutral realm in between these rival gods*. Paul tells the Corinthians that they must self-consciously glorify God by means of their common daily activities. Sometimes this requires absolute abstention: demonic feasts. At other times, it involves selective abstention: meat offered to idols when weak Christians observe the mature Christian at his meal. At other times, it involves participation: enjoying a good meal of meat offered to idols. At other times, participation is mandated: the Lord's Supper. But nothing is neutral: neither eating nor abstention.

This view of life is not well understood by Christians, and never has been. The familiar but false distinction between the religious realm and the hypothetically secular realm has confused Christians since the days of the early church. Christian scholars have used the philosophical categories of Greek humanism to defend the faith since the days of Justin Martyr in the second century. Christians have confused other legitimate distinctions with humanism's distinction between religion and secularism. There is a legitimate biblical distinction between sacred and profane, i.e., correct formal worship vs. false worship.[13] There is also a legitimate biblical distinction between sacred and common: formal worship vs. informal worship. Christians have

13. Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), ch. 6.

not understood these distinctions. They have adopted something analogous to the humanists' false distinction: religious vs. secular. They have also adopted a variation of the humanists' myth of neutrality. They accept the humanists' view of a neutral, common-ground, secular realm of life, especially in politics, the realm of civil justice. They implicitly deny that God judges every area of life according to biblical law. Why implicitly? Because they explicitly deny that Christians, as God's covenantal agents in history, have a God-given responsibility to work for the establishment of civil institutions that govern formally in terms of biblical civil law, which includes biblical civil sanctions. They view the formal law of God as narrowly circumscribed, relating to personal morality and family morality. They regard the general culture as beyond God's law.

As modern covenant-breaking society has become more self-conscious and more dominant, a few Christians have begun to question the reigning myth of neutrality. This change in opinion began in the United States in the 1970s. The Supreme Court's unilateral legalization of abortion in 1973 was a major factor in this shift of opinion. There is no neutral zone between a live baby and an aborted baby. There is no neutral realm of God's law that reconciles a live baby with an aborted baby. Humanistic law has come down against the live baby and in favor of its executioners. Humanistic law is clearly in violation of God's law. Humanists universally reconize this. Christians rarely do.

2. Theocracy and Theonomy

A minority of Christian activists now say that they do not accept the myth of neutrality. Nevertheless, they still do accept it. To deny the myth of neutrality means denying it in every realm of life. Such a denial forces a Christian to come face-to-face with the ultimate implication of this denial: *theocracy*. If there really is no neutrality, then theocracy is an inescapable concept: the rule of either one god or another. In our day, the cultural conflict is between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. This culture war rages in every area of life.

Modern Christians do not want to defend or promote the institutional theocracy of the God of the Bible. In order to escape the embarrassment of proclaiming the institutional theocracy of the God of the Bible, they are willing to accept the kingdom of man as the only politically acceptable institutional alternative. And so, one by one, those American fundamentalist leaders who proclaimed in the 1980's

that there is no neutrality have all quietly abandoned this proclamation. By attempting to retain their position both as political pluralists and as Christian activists, they have become intellectually schizophrenic. As political pluralists, they have come before the public as defenders of Christianity as one legitimate worldview among many, but never as proclaimers of an institutionally, culturally authoritative word of God. They are trapped on the horns of a self-imposed dilemma. They cannot answer this question, and so they pretend that it does not exist: "How can God's law be authoritative, yet also be merely one politically legitimate choice among many?" I ask: Which Old Testament prophet ever came before sinners in the name of such a view of social and political ethics? But it is worse than even this. They all proclaim the present-day inapplicability of Bible-revealed civil law. They declare that the issues of political life must not be settled by an appeal to explicit biblical laws.

When they first discovered the political, moral, and religious implications of legalized abortion, they told their followers and their opponents that abortion is murder. They opposed abortion, not on the basis of its prohibition by biblical law (Ex. 21:22–23),[14] but because it is murder. But then, when asked the obvious question by their critics—"Are you calling for the state to execute the legally convicted abortionist, his assistants (accomplices), and the mother, since the Old Testament requires the death penalty for murder?"—most of them grew uncharacteristically silent, others denied that abortion is really murder after all, while others declared that God no longer requires the death penalty for murder. Members of the last-named group not only have abandoned Moses; they have abandoned Noah. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Gen. 9:6). They are intellectually schizophrenic. This condition affects their public positions in many areas. They affirm their commitment to political pluralism; they deny God's theocracy; they deny the continuing validity of Old Testament law; and then they insist that Christianity and the Bible have answers to all of men's problems, including politics. I commented on this dilemma in 1982, and said that it would not go away until they abandoned either political pluralism or Christianity.[15] It has not gone away.

14. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia, 2012), Part 3, *Tools of Dominion* (1990), ch. 37.

15. Gary North, "The Intellectual Schizophrenia of the New Christian Right," *Christianity and Civilization*, I (1982), pp. 1–40.

Every aspect of life is under God's law. Life is therefore under God's comprehensive judgment. All of life has been affected by Adam's sin. Wherever sin reigns, there Christ's offer of redemption has a healing role to play. This means that all of life is subject to God's comprehensive redemption.[16] To deny that God's grace (positive sanctions) can apply to all of life is to deny that all of life is under sin and under God's law and therefore also under God's judgment (negative sanctions). This, in principle, is exactly what pietism denies. *Pietism proclaims a souls-only redemption*. Humanists enthusiastically agree, for such a view of history surrenders most of life to mammon and mammon's covenantal agents. It willingly hands over the lawful authority of rulership in history to covenant-breakers. It does this in the name of Jesus. Pietists want to avoid responsibility for anything that happens outside of our homes and churches.

D. Part-Time Humanist Service?

Paul argues in this passage that all Christian service is supposed to be full-time. It begins with eating and drinking. Paul takes common daily activities and identifies them as means of glorifying God. Paul is saying that all service is necessarily full-time. The question is this: Which god does a man serve full-time? Does he serve God or mammon? Christ said that we cannot serve both.

Pietists do not accept Paul's teaching on this point, which does not conform with their view of the world as forever divided in history into two realms: Christianity's (small) and anti-Christianity's (large). They praise something they call full-time Christian service. By this, they have in mind mainly the work of ordained ministers of the gospel and unordained missionaries to foreign lands. They have in mind people whose income is financed by tithes and (mainly) offerings. This definition might include a church secretary. Less probably, it might include the church janitor. It might include a teacher in a Christian school, just so long as he or she is paid less than what a government-school teacher is paid. But it does not include a Christian businessman who is funding other Christians' full-time Christian service with his tithe. A Christian who owns a profit-seeking Christian school and who thereby gets rich would not be regarded by pietists as being in full-time Christian service. For pietists, full-time Christian service means poverty for Jesus.

16. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), Appendix C.

The concept of full-time Christian service is the pietist's version of the humanist's doctrine of the sacred-secular distinction. The humanist claims that he wants to confine men's deference to God to the human heart and the church, "where religion belongs." But whenever humanists secure sufficient votes, they move to knock down or confiscate the churches. Russian Communists confiscated churches in the name of the state, and converted them into museums or warehouses. Then they took over the schools. Atheism became the official position of the schools, and the schools were a state monopoly. Communists used tax-funded, compulsory state education to drive the concept of a supernatural God out of the lives and minds of the students. This policy was consistent with the ultimate implication of all humanism: man is god, and the God of the Bible is a socially and psychologically dangerous myth. On this point, non-Communist humanists believe the same. The atheism of America's tax-funded schools is almost as intense as the Communists' schools, and the schools are becoming more anti-Christian, decade by decade. They were messianic humanist institutions from the beginning.[17]

At every stage in the preliminary development of humanism as a civilization, there can be found humanist spokesmen who assure Christians that the eradication of all traces of supernatural religion is not their long-term goal. But whenever humanists gain sufficient votes or sufficient political power, this is when humanism's official commitment to pluralism ends. We have seen this again and again. We see it today in the textbooks of tax-funded schools. Nevertheless, most Christians remain content with proclaiming (though never receiving) "equal time for Jesus." Humanists want no time for Jesus, which is what Jesus officially receives whenever humanists gain sufficient political power. Humanists cannot serve God, any more than Christians can serve mammon, except inconsistently.

Pietists are inconsistent. They believe that Christianity cannot redeem the dominion of mammon, which necessarily rules this world, they insist. They believe that Christians must remain content to live in a bifurcated society in which mammon provides the means to wealth, and truly holy Christians must remain in the economic poverty of full-time Christian service. Pietism's commitment to this view of history is why, in the interim stages of humanism, pietists and humanists invariably establish an informal alliance. The pietists publicly defer

17. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Messianic Character of American Education: Studies in the History of the Philosophy of Education* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1963).

to the humanists in the areas of public, tax-funded policy. They affirm only the right of "each person to worship God in his or her own way," which in the United States means mainly on Sunday and on Wednesday evenings. Almost everything else in life is assumed to be *part-time humanist service*, and fully legitimate for almost everyone, including most Christians, to remain a part of. They do actually not use this phrase, "full-time humanist service," but it is implied by a distinction between full-time Christian service and . . . ? What? They never say, exactly. Part-time Christian service? But if Christian service can legitimately be part-time, then humanist service is also part-time and also legitimate. Therefore, at least part of the time, most Christians are involved in part-time humanist service, and legitimately so, according to pietists. If there is no full-time Christian service for the vast majority of Christians, then there has to be part-time service to something other than Christianity.

Pietists refuse to discuss this implication of their position because, first, they have rarely thought systematically about what they are really saying, and, second, because to say such things in public might sound goofy. To tell most Christians that God has called them to part-time humanist service does, in fact, sound goofy. It was in opposition to such an idea that Paul wrote this passage.

This is Protestant fundamentalism's version of the worldview of medieval Catholicism, which taught a nature-grace bifurcation. The celibate priesthood was said to be devoted to full-time Christian service, which the church called the order of grace. Christians who supported the friars, monks, and parish priests with their a portion of their production were said to be involved in the order of nature. The Roman Catholic Church still formally honors this medieval tradition by maintaining two forms of priestly ordination: secular (parish clergy) and regular (monastic clergy). Protestant pietists are unknowingly the defenders of something resembling the medieval worldview, but without any monasteries to provide institutional brotherhood for those who are called into full-time Christian service.

Full-time Christian service is what Paul calls the Corinthians into. They were not self-consciously eating and drinking to serve Christ. Paul tells them that everything they do, they should do to glorify God.

Conclusion

This passage undermines every concept of a neutral zone in between service to God and service to anything else. Christians are required by God to serve Him with all of their being, all of the time. "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:5).[18] "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37).

There is no concept of part-time Christian service found in the Bible. There is full-time Christian service; there is also full-time mammon service. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24).[19]

Full-time Christian service implies the existence of comprehensive, authoritative performance standards. It also implies God's sanctions. This is why Jesus offered parables of an owner who goes on a long journey, but who eventually comes back to demand an accounting from his servants. The owner finally imposes sanctions, positive and negative, in terms of their performance. God's testing of His stewards began in the garden of Eden, when God departed for a time, only to return to demand a formal accounting. Everything that Adam and Eve did during God's physical absence was supposed to be full-time Christian service: eating from all trees except one. Full-time Christian service did involve a refusal to eat from one tree. Full-time service to Satan involved eating from that one tree. Everything else would have been full-time service to God. But, had their act of defiance been maintained apart from God's negative sanctions on them for their disobedience, Adam and Eve from then on would have been involved in full-time Satanic service. Their eating and drinking would have been rebellious. It would have been full-time service to Satan. This is why God closed access to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24).

Christians are required by God to work to reclaim everything from Satan, who is a lawless squatter in history. They are, symbolically speaking, to reclaim the weed-burdened garden of the world for Christ. Having eaten at the Lord's Table, they are to go out and reclaim the world for Christ by eating and drinking to the glory of God. They are therefore to exercise dominion, as God required of Adam

18. North, *Inheritance and Dominion*, ch. 15.
19. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 14.

(Gen. 1:26–28)[20] and also Noah (Gen. 9:1–3).[21] They are not to forget that this dominion assignment involves obeying God's laws in every area of life. They are not to eat and drink unlawfully in demonic covenantal feasts, which were and remain recapitulations of mankind's forbidden meal in the garden of Eden. They are to practice godly judgment in whatever they do because God's laws invoke God's sanctions: in history, at the final judgment, and forever.

20. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), chaps. 3, 4.

21. *Ibid.*, ch. 18.

15

HIERARCHY: FAMILY, MARKET, AND STATE

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

I CORINTHIANS 11:1–3

The theocentric principle here is the hierarchy of authority, with God at the top. God has established legal representatives in the middle of this hierarchy: God > representatives > constituents. This is point two of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. What Would Jesus Do?

A widely popular American fundamentalist slogan in the late twentieth century was this: "What would Jesus do?" People even wore sweat shirts and tee-shirts with **WWJD?** written on them. When capital letters are used as substitutes for words, the slogan represented by these letters has become a commonplace within certain circles.

Anyone who has carefully read the Gospel of John knows that it was almost impossible for Jesus' contemporaries to predict what He would do or say. His answers to questions baffled people, including those who were closest to Him. His responses seemed to make no sense. A good example is the incident at the wedding feast at Cana, when they ran out of wine. "And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine." Who could have predicted either

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 2. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 2.

His verbal response to His mother or His instructions to the servants? First, His verbal response: "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come" (John 2:3–4). Then, His instructions: "And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it" (vv. 6–8).

What stands out in the four gospels, but especially John's, is that Jesus was unpredictable. He kept His disciples and His opponents confused most of the time. If anything, His disciples were more confused than His opponents. The best example of this is their respective responses to His crucifixion. The disciples scattered. Meanwhile, the Jewish leaders took steps to see to it that the disciples could not steal His body and then announce His resurrection. They understood what He had predicted: His bodily resurrection.

> Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch (Matt. 27:62–66).

The disciples had no idea about what Jesus was about to do. They had repeatedly heard His words about His resurrection, yet they had comprehended nothing. The Jews had heard the same words, and they had comprehended a little. Neither group expected Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead, but the Jews at least understood what He had said would happen next. They assumed, incorrectly, that the disciples had also understood. His closest disciples were the last to know. The women found out before they did (Luke 24:10).

What would Jesus do? Those who were closest to Him did not know. Even after His ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit, none of them foresaw what Jesus would do and say to Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). Yet that event changed both the history of the church and the history of the world. Paul would be sent by God to the gentiles to preach the gospel and establish new churches. He would also write his epistles.

B. Hierarchy and Ordinances

Paul instructs his listeners to follow him, even as he follows Christ. He does not tell them to follow Christ directly. He does not ask them to imagine what Jesus would do. He asks them to "keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you" (v. 2). *He tells them to turn to* ***God's supernaturally revealed law*** *in their quest to follow Jesus.*

1. Biblical Law as an Intermediary

God's law is an inanimate intermediary between God and man. It always has been, from before the creation of man. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26).[2] Man was assigned the task of worldwide dominion before God created him. The three persons of the Godhead spoke on behalf of man even before man existed. Put differently, the persons of the Godhead *spoke representatively* for man. The law which they imposed on mankind was positive: to exercise dominion.

Next, God gave Adam a law to obey during His bodily absence. "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16–17). This law was both positive and negative: to eat and to avoid eating. Man was to enjoy feasting, but not from the forbidden tree. That tree was God's exclusive property.

Because Adam was under God, he was necessarily under God's law. He was therefore also under God's sanctions. Man's relationship with God is always judicial. Man's judicial status determines where he is in God's hierarchy. After the Fall of man, there were only two judicial statuses: disinherited son and adopted son.

In this passage, Paul describes a hierarchy. He is under Christ, he says. Paul's listeners/readers are in turn under him. The intermediary factor is the system of ordinances, which Paul says that he delivered to the church. This hierarchy is judicial. The test of a person's position in this hierarchy is therefore judicial: obedience or disobedience to the ordinances.

2. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 3.

The head of every man is Christ (v. 3a). Paul does not say "every believer." He says "every man." The Greek here is clear. This principle of *Christ's universal headship* over all mankind is the basis of *mankind's final subordination*. "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Rom. 14:11). "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Phil. 2:10). Having announced that the head of every man is Christ, Paul writes that wives are subordinate to their husbands. "The head of the woman is the man" (v. 3b). This, too, is a universal condition. It is not limited to Christian marriages. It is based on the pre-Fall definition of the family. Finally, Christ is subordinate to God. "The head of Christ is God" (v. 3c). There is a cosmic hierarchy that extends from God through Jesus Christ, as perfect humanity, and from Christ to man and to woman.

2. Hierarchy Within the Godhead

Cornelius Van Til has written that all Christian heresies begin with false subordinationism: Christ as less than God.[3] But this does not mean that Christ was not functionally subordinate to God in terms of His work. He repeatedly said that He was. "And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me" (John 5:36).

Theologians preserve orthodoxy by explaining the Trinity, first, in terms of itself; second, in relation to the world. The *ontological Trinity* describes the interaction of three persons, each fully God. The *economical Trinity* describes the functional operations of each of the three persons in terms of the creation. In Luke, we read of the Holy Spirit's being sent by the Father. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13). In Jesus' long sermon at the Last Supper, we learn that the Spirit is sent from the Father by way of the Son. "But when the Comforter is

3. Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, revised and abridged (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1963), p. 25.

come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26).

Jesus said that He represented the Father so perfectly that he who had seen Him had seen the Father.

> If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works (John 14:7–10).

The incarnate Jesus, as perfectly human, was subordinate to God the Father. "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:28). Yet Jesus was in union with the Father. "But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him" (John 10:38). His union with a divine being did not imply shared substance with mankind, for there are not four persons in the Trinity. So, this union has to be ethical. It is a matter of His perfect fulfillment of the law in history. Jesus did the works of the law. We are to believe these works, He said. Jesus kept God's ordinances.

3. Hierarchy and Adoption

Jesus is the last Adam, Paul writes later in this epistle. "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit" (I Cor. 15:45). Christ's perfect sonship is the sole legal basis of God's adoption of disinherited sons. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). Furthermore,

> But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ (Gal. 4:4–7).

We are heirs of God through Jesus Christ. The public evidence of our sonship are these: our participation in the sacraments and our keeping of God's law. This evidence is necessary to identify a person as being in the camp of the redeemed.

> He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth (I John 2:1–8).

> Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us (I John 3:21–24).

Antinomianism cannot deal successfully with these passages. The antinomian seeks to escape the requirements of God's law. But the New Testament is clear: any such attempt to throw off God's law is evidence of covenant-breaking.

4. Male and Female Created He Them

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (v. 3). God is over Christ in Christ's capacity as a perfect human. Christ, in turn, rules directly over every man. This is a universal hierarchy, based on original creation and also on Christ's bodily resurrection. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18).[4] Christians are in a special hierarchy as adopted heirs. They are part of a redeemed hierarchy.

Every man is to rule over his wife. This hierarchy was challenged when Satan's covenantal representative, the serpent, tested Eve, and

4. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 45.

Eve tested Adam. The war against God's hierarchy was originally satanic, for Satan seeks to overthrow God's hierarchical rule over him and his kingdom. Man, as God's image, must be brought under Satan's authority if Satan is to press his kingdom claims successfully. This is why he attacked the woman first. She, in turn, lured Adam into sin. There is a war over hierarchies in history.

Christ bore responsibility for the original sin of mankind by suffering the sanctions that God the Father applied to this sin. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21). Christ restored the hierarchy of inheriting sonship at the cost of the cross. All of the covenantal hierarchies were definitively redeemed at the resurrection. It is the Christians' task in history to act as God's agents in the progressive redemption of these definitively redeemed hierarchical institutions.

C. Capitalism and Feminism

Within the Trinity, there is a division of labor. Between husband and wife, there is a division of labor.

1. The Division of Labor

Free market capitalism has extended the division of labor by means of the pooling of capital, which in turn has funded technological improvements. In doing so, capitalism has narrowed the post-Fall gap between the productivity of men and women. This process is best represented by an electric light switch. A typical man has no advantage over a typical woman in turning on an electric light. Men did have an advantage in providing light when the main source of light was a burning log or torch. Men could haul large branches and chop wood more effectively than women could. The division of labor in pre-capitalist societies had to do with differences in physical strength as well as the distinction of childbearing. But, with the coming of electricity and the internal combustion engine, horsepower has replaced manpower. The result has been a steady development toward the gender-equalization of productivity. Physical dexterity increasingly counts for more than physical strength. The mental manipulation of images, sequences, and numbers counts for more than the physical manipulation of things.

In the United States, the feminist movement, which began in the mid-nineteenth century, has paralleled the development of capitalist tools of production and the arrival of women into the marketplace as

producers. The women's suffrage movement began in the northeastern section of the nation, where large numbers of women had been brought into textile mills. The shift of textile production from the household—a "cottage industry"—to the factory made possible the early political mobilization of women.

American women first gained the right to vote in Kentucky in 1838: local school elections. This legal precedent in school board elections continued throughout the nineteenth century. This political right reflected the fact that women were moving into the classrooms as teachers, displacing men. But it was not until electricity became widespread in the cities that all American women received the right to vote. Men voted to ratify this Constitutional amendment in 1919 and 1920 in part because they recognized that women had become significant factors in the marketplace, as producers as well as customers. World War I (1914–18) had made this clear to the West: women had gone into factories to produce the weapons that had been used on the battlefields of Europe.

2. Annie, Get Your Gun

In 1946, the year after World War II ended, Irving Berlin wrote a musical comedy based on the show business career of the late-nineteenth-century riflewoman and entertainer, Annie Oakley: *Annie, Get Your Gun*. One of the musical's best-known songs is "I can do better." Annie and a rival male sharpshooter, whom she defeated (in real life, but not in the play) and later married, sing a duet. The song's back-and-forth lyrics are silly, and presumably were meant to be, but its message reflected a new social perception in 1946, when millions of women did not leave the factories after the war ended, unlike the post-war tradition of World War I.

> Anything you can do, I can do better,
> I can do anything better than you.
> No, you can't./Yes, I can.
> No, you can't./Yes, I can.
> No, you can't./Yes, I can. Yes, I can.

The rifle is a great physical equalizer. Annie Oakley was a master of this tool. She gained technical supremacy. Capitalism has mass produced rifles and many other tools that have the same equalizing effect.

Economic transformation preceded political transformation in the advent of women's suffrage. Women gained access to the marketplace

as producers before they gained access to the ballot box as voters. Biblically speaking, the sequence of this transformation was undesirable. Covenant in principle precedes contract. Civil sanctions are in principle superior to economic sanctions. But when biblical principles are not honored in one realm of society, God sometimes transfers authority to people working in other realms. These realms may be geographical. They may be institutional. The free market encourages experimentation and change. Customers, by imposing the economic sanctions of profit and loss, pressure producers to make changes, and these changes have unforeseen and unplanned consequences in other social institutions.

Capitalism's empowering of women in the marketplace has led to a re-thinking of women's roles in every area of society. What began simply as a profitable way to produce textiles more abundantly or to teach children less expensively has resulted in a re-structuring of social roles. An increase in the division of labor through capital accumulation has allowed women to discover niches in the marketplace in which their skills can be matched more closely with customer demand—demand which is increasingly dominated by women. As they say in the American real estate industry, "Wives decide which house to buy; husbands, at most, retain the right of veto." The free market rewards producers who can meet customer demand more efficiently than their competitors. The free market's system of economic sanctions—profit and loss—rewards those producers who hire workers whose skills and whose willingness to compete in terms of price offer their employers an advantage. Producers who refuse to offer employment to niche-matching workers suffer losses when their competitors do offer such employment. Competition pressures all employers to seek out the most efficient workers. This is why women in capitalist societies have successfully invaded the work place. They have also gained political power.

Communist societies also brought women into the factories in the twentieth century. Their rulers had little choice. To compete in world markets, including the market for military supremacy, the Communists could not ignore the productivity of women.

The availability of employment for women in the marketplace has dramatically increased the cost of rearing children. Cost is defined as the economic value of the opportunities foregone. When women had few employment opportunities outside of the household, children were far cheaper for families. But, as women have become employable

for money, the economic value of their labor time has increased. This has increased the cost of rearing children: forfeited monetary income for stay-at-home mothers. In an economy that offers mass-produced, price-competitive contraceptive devices, would-be mothers weigh the benefits of being full-time mothers at home against the net income they can earn in the marketplace. Children's perceived costs to the family sometimes exceed the perceived benefits when employment opportunities for women outside the home appear in the free market. This is another example of a fundamental law of life: with increased opportunities comes increased responsibility. The decision to bear children or not imposes costs on the decision-makers. Each result has its appropriate costs and benefits, not just for the decision-makers, but also for society. An obvious example is the effect that the uncoerced decisions of millions of families not to bear more children will have a generation later on tax-funded retirement programs. The West is about to find out what happens when there are too few workers entering the work force to support the retirees.[5]

The welfare state has pressured married women to enter the labor market. The economic burden of wealth-transfer payments increases, especially the cost of tax-funded retirement and medical programs. Taxes rise. This has forced wives into the work force because after-tax family income keeps falling. Wives seek employment in order to maintain their families' life styles. This process has reduced the birth rate and has increased the abortion rate, which in turn steadily increases the tax burden per worker to fund a growing number of retirees. Usually, we call this a vicious circle, but defenders of state-funded retirement programs vastly outnumber the critics, so no one in authority speaks of this circle of taxation and reduced birth rates as vicious. It is simply not discussed publicly in terms of taxation. To do so would reveal a hidden cost of the modern welfare state.

D. Rival Hierarchies

When a wife becomes a significant contributor to a family's monetary income, she gains a stronger voice in her home. The cost of ignoring her opinions and desires keeps rising for husbands. Wives can walk out of a marriage, and do. They can threaten to quit working. They spend the money that they earn. The West's civil courts allow all of this.

5. Peter G. Peterson, *Gray Dawn: How the Coming Age Wave Will Transform America—And the World* (New York: Times Books, 1999).

The cost to husbands of laying down the law increases. There is an economic rule: as the cost of something increases, less of it is demanded. Husbands tend to defer to wage-earning wives more than they would defer to non-wage-earning wives. So, the structure of economic production has the effect of undermining the covenantal hierarchy of the family.

The free market does not count the cost that must be borne by non-market institutions. An employer is economically responsible to customers first and to share-owners second. He is not economically or legally responsible for what goes on inside the families of his employees. If he seeks to replace a factor of production, including an employee, the cost to him of making this replacement is whatever income the present factor of production offers to him, in comparison to the income offered by a replacement factor. Economists say that this difference is marginal. Usually, it is small. Key athletes, entertainers, or other employees may not be easily replaceable, but most employees are. The employer can afford to replace most factors of production. He may or may not consider the effects of corporate policies on the output of existing employees, but he pays no attention to the potential effects of his decision on the entire economy's employment policies. He cannot personally affect these society-wide effects, so there is no immediate economic reason for him to pay attention to them. He would be unwise to worry about whatever he cannot control. Nevertheless, competitive pressures within an industry can spread the adoption of new employment policies, and these policies may change society in unforeseen ways, even ways undesired by those whose individual decisions effected the changes. The decision to hire women is surely one of the most significant examples of this "law of unintended consequences."

Decisions made at the margin of firms, such as whether to hire wives, can sometimes have society-wide effects that are not marginal, but fundamental. In a free market, the customer is at the top of the economic hierarchy. His decision to buy or not to buy imposes sanctions on sellers: profit or loss. The customer does not care about the marginal effects on society of his decision to buy or not buy. He makes his decision, not in terms of its society-wide effects, but in terms of his standards as a customer: quality, convenience, and price. He asks, "What's in it for me?" He does not ask, "Did wage-earning wives have any part to play in producing this item?"

The covenantal hierarchy of the family is very often in conflict with

the economic hierarchy of the free market or the economic hierarchy of a socialist commonwealth. The divisive issue in both economies is the division of labor. The division of labor imposes institutional costs as well as institutional benefits. When people are more concerned with monetary income than they are with maintaining proper covenantal relationships, they suffer losses, and society suffers losses. This insight regarding families' monetary income and its effects on the covenantal chain of command is a specific application of a more general rule. "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13).[6]

Economic growth expands the wealth available to members of both kingdoms: God's and mammon's. To blame economic growth and the extension of the division of labor misses the ethical point. The covenantal faithfulness or unfaithfulness of market participants as individuals is the determining factor. People make decisions in terms of individual costs and benefits, but they cannot properly assess either costs or benefits apart from considering the law of God. Their perception of God's law in turn depends on God's grace: common and special.

It may be easier to remember this principle by means of two images: a paycheck and a contraceptive. Choices are individual, but millions of individual decisions shape society. The West is visibly committing slow suicide. The national birth rate in every Western industrial nation is below the population-replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman. Were it not for immigrants from non-Western or non-industrial nations, the national birth rates would be even lower. The dominion covenant—biological multiplication—is being rejected in the West. If this does not change, then the West will be replaced by cultures that conform themselves to the demographic laws that govern the dominion covenant, such as Islam.

E. Family Only?

Paul makes it clear in this passage that there is a covenantal hierarchy in the creation: God > Christ > man > woman. This is presented in universal terms. It clearly applies to the family: husbands and wives. Does it apply to the church? Does it apply to politics?

6. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed.(Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 39.

1. Women in the Church

It surely applies to the church. In the verses that immediately follow, Paul writes:

> Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels (I Cor. 11:4–10).

In Paul's day, there were prophets and prophetesses. The daughters of the deacon Philip were prophetesses (Acts 21:8–9). So, in the prophetic division of labor, women possessed equal authority. Nevertheless, they did not possess equal judicial authority within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. They were required to cover their heads when they spoke in the name of God. Whenever they became lawful voices of authority, they had to subordinate themselves to male church leaders by means of a symbol: a head covering. Also, they lawfully spoke prophetically only outside of church worship services. In worship services, another rule prevailed. "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (I Cor. 14:34–35).

A prophetess spoke authoritatively in God's name. Listeners were required to obey whatever a prophetess said during these unique instances of direct revelation from God. This gave her judicial authority. She was at the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in terms of obedience owed during these instances of direct revelation. But the temporary nature of her authority had to be marked by a public symbol of her ecclesiastical subordination to men: the head covering.[7]

A symbol is important. It represents a larger truth. The symbol of the prophetess's head covering represented the general legal status

7. This referred to long hair. "Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering" (I Cor. 11:13–15). Long hair is a mark of covenantal

of women: subordinate to men. This subordination was true in the church. It was also true in the family. Yet in neither institution was the role of the woman in the division of labor denied. The word of the prophetess was no less authoritative because of her gender. She possessed the voice of authority. The value of her revelation was in no way diminished because of her subordinate covenantal status. Put differently, her subordinate covenantal status did not imply the judicially inferior authority of her words.

We can apply this ecclesiastical leadership principle to, for example, the ability to predict the movement of prices in a developed capital market. If a woman possesses an advantage here, statistically speaking, then investors would be unwise not to follow her suggestions. They should invest their money in terms of her forecasts. This has nothing to do with the covenantal subordination of women to men. It has everything to do with the economic authority of customers, whose individual decisions shape the free market's ever-shifting array of prices. This woman understands the price effects of future decisions of customers better than her male competitors do. The capital markets consider her gender irrelevant to the issue of satisfying customer demand. Investors in the capital markets ask only this: "What have you done for me lately?"

2. Women in the Military

In the military, the presence of women in the ranks creates enormous problems, beginning with the system of rank itself. Women are required to obey orders. This creates opportunities for men of higher rank to misuse their rank for sexual exploitation. Second, women in general are not as strong physically as men are. A soldier in the field cannot rely on a woman with the same degree of confidence that he would rely on a man. Third, society imposes on men a protective impulse with regard to women. A soldier in the field will tend to disobey orders in order to defend a woman in the ranks, when he would not be equally ready to disobey an order to protect another male. This threatens to disrupt the chain of command. This is also the reason why homosexuality in the military has been universally condemned in the West and in most non-Western armies. A combattant may aban-

---

subordination. This is why the Mosaic law required captive foreign women who were willing to become wives of Israelites to shave their heads one month before the marriage (Deut. 21:12). This severed their subordination to their former nation's gods through the male heads of their households.

don a buddy to his fate when the battle plan requires it, but he may not abandon a sexual partner. Homosexuality reduces the predictability of battle plans.

On the other hand, women in technical fields such as meteorology, weapons development, cryptography, software development, ordinance, navigation, and so forth may be equally capable as men. In an increasingly technological army, the light-switch phenomenon reasserts itself: no special gender advantage. The covenantal problem is the chain of command. How can women in the ranks be protected from sexual exploitation? How can their presence not affect joint-gender team performance? The camaraderie and *esprit de corps* in a military unit or a police unit is heavily dependent on shared risk. When women are exposed to the same degree of risk of life and death, this disrupts the military/protective function, which is unquestionably masculine. In this sense, the military is different from the free market, in which the shared risk is economic. In the free market, men have no sense of obligation to protect women. They may be quite happy to put rival women out of business.

Modern society has not yet found a way to integrate women's technical productivity into a military chain of command. Either the military is deprived of technical skills, which can be disastrous in today's high-tech warfare, or else the performance of battle units is compromised by the presence of women, who are perceived by men as needing greater protection. It is the life-and-death risk of participation in a military chain of command that makes the official equality of the sexes a liability organizationally.

There is one other factor that is rarely discussed in public: female homosexuality. The primary characteristics of success in combat are masculine. This subsidizes the careers of those women who possess masculine characteristics. It rewards certain features of female homosexuality. The creation of same-sex sexual relationships within a military chain of command leads to exploitation by rank and also leads to problems of protective impulses under combat conditions, and to hierarchical favoritism in peacetime, both of which undermine military discipline.

The best solution seems to be the use of specialized female civilian support units behind the lines. Throughout history, there have been such privately organized, highly specialized civilian support units—camp followers—so the presence of women close behind the lines is not a radical suggestion, strategically speaking. Only the ser-

vices officially performed by women would be different. The military would have to pay competitive wages to the members of such technical support units, but that is the cost of maintaining the integrity of the chain of command.

In the Old Testament, Deborah served as a military commander. She officially commanded the Israelite army because her second in command, Barak, refused to go into battle without her presence (Jud. 5:8). This was a disgrace to the men of Israel, as she pointed out to him (v. 9). Barak commanded the troops (vv. 10, 14). Deborah remained behind the lines. She was at the pinnacle of the chain of command, but she faced death only if Israel lost. Her presence in the chain of command did not threaten the performance of the army. The protective impulse did not threaten men's performance on the battlefield. She was not on the battlefield. In this sense, she was more like a queen or a president or a prime minister than a general. Her authority was judicial. We should think of this arrangement as the civilian control over the military.

3. Women in Politics

Then what of politics? Should women not exercise political rule? Deborah did (Jud. 4–5). This was rare, but it did take place. There is no biblical evidence that women cannot lawfully declare God's law and impose civil sanctions. Deborah did. The deciding issue here is functional. Who best declares the law? This is a matter of competition, just as it is in the labor markets and capital markets.

In civil government, there is no explicit restriction comparable to the two ecclesiastical restrictions: the head covering for prophetesses and women's silence in corporate worship services. Question: In what way, if any, is the general principle of the subordination of women to men supposed to be manifested in New Testament civil government?

The covenantal issue here is sanctions. Should women be allowed to impose civil sanctions? This is what the right to vote is all about: the imposition of civil sanctions. If women cannot lawfully impose sanctions from the top by being elected or appointed, then on what legal basis can they vote, and vice versa? If women can lawfully impose civil sanctions at any level, then they are part of the civil covenantal hierarchy. The twin questions of hierarchy and the right to impose sanctions are inseparable: points two and four of the biblical covenant model.[8]

8. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, chaps. 2, 4.

If Paul's words are interpreted as banning women from exercising all covenantal sanctions over men, then Deborah's judgeship must not be regarded as a precedent for the New Testament. The New Testament would have to be seen as annulling Deborah's precedent. But does it? Paul does forbid women from speaking in church worship services, but women never held ecclesiastical office in the Old Covenant. For women, there is continuity ecclesiastically, Old Covenant to New Covenant. Question: Why would the continuity of civil rule be different in the New Covenant? There is no express New Testament rule prohibiting women from exercising civil sanctions. There was no such rule under the Old Covenant, either.

The hermeneutics governing theonomy is this: if there is no New Testament annulment of an Old Testament law or principle, then the Old Testament law still prevails. Theonomy assumes judicial continuity. Deborah's example provides us with insight into the hierarchy of civil sanctions. Women had the right to impose them when they held civil office. Judgeship was surely civil.

F. Economics: Contractual, not Covenantal

Christian economics moves analytically from covenantal law to economics, which is contractual rather than covenantal (oath-bound under God). Economics is subordinate to family, civil, and ecclesiastical law because contracts are subordinate to covenants.

Point two of the biblical covenant model is hierarchy-authority-representation. The covenantal question is this: Who lawfully possess-es the voice of authority? Hierarchy raises questions of representation.

This is the issue of covenantal authority in history. The doctrine of the covenant is itself a manifestation of point two. This is why Exodus, the second book in the Pentateuch, is called the book of the covenant. "And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Ex. 24:7). The only thing in history that speaks finally is the Bible itself. It is the final voice of authority in history. The institutional question of lawful covenantal authority revolves around the Bible. Who speaks lawfully for God, in terms of the Bible, in any historical situation?

Paul refers to himself as Christ's representative. He tells his readers to follow him, even as he followed Christ. Paul serves as God's lawful model, according to Paul. Paul's writings are canonical, so we must take his claim seriously.

We must also take seriously his other claim: the man serves as the head over the woman, even as God serves as head over Christ. The question institutionally is this: Is a woman bound by oath under a man? In marriage, yes. What about in church government? Yes, because of the sacrament of baptism: an oath sign. Women are not to speak in church worship services.

Then what about civil government? There is no gender-specific oath of feminine obedience to men in a civil covenant, as the example of Deborah indicates. There is nothing in the New Testament that explicitly rejects the Mosaic office of judge. There is also nothing in the New Covenant that rejects the Mosaic authority of women to serve as judges.

In the realm of economics, there is nothing to prohibit women from competing with men. They do so as customers, for buyers compete against buyers. Customers, including women, make daily decisions regarding which producers have best served them. Customers exercise economic sanctions by buying or refusing to buy. Women make these decisions. The biblical hierarchy of ownership has always included women. The wife owned her dowry (Gen. 24:53). Daughters possessed the right of landed inheritance over the deceased's next of kin, if he died without leaving sons (Num. 36).[9] Women in the Old Covenant also competed against men as producers. "She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant" (Prov. 31:24).[10]

The covenantal hierarchy of legal ownership of resources includes women; therefore, the hierarchy of economic sanctions also includes women. Women compete against men as customers-buyers (sellers of money). They also compete against men as producers-sellers (buyers of money). Because women, as customers, lawfully impose economic sanctions on producers, they also possess the lawful authority to seek positive economic sanctions as producers.

The conclusion is inescapable: *women possess lawful authority to impose economic sanctions*. The Bible's male-female hierarchy is not judicially applicable in economics. This hierarchy appears to be imposed by biology in certain areas,[11] but free market capitalism tends to re-

9. Gary North, *Sanctions and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Numbers*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1997] 2012), ch. 22.

10. Gary North, *Wisdom and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Proverbs*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2007] 2012), ch. 86.

11. Higher mathematics, theoretical physics, highest-level chess, and boxing come to mind. At the same time, very few men are able to compete in these areas.

duce gender-related differences in productivity. Capitalism produces labor-saving and therefore labor-equalizing tools of production. Women exercise authority over machines equal to men's authority over machines. The electric light switch is the symbol of this equality.

The essence of the free market is open entry: the right of any legally responsible adult to make bids for both ownership and temporary control (rent). If women can legally own goods, then they also possess the right to make bids. If someone owns anything, he or she can legally seek to disown it. There is no right of ownership without the right of disownership. The means of disownership in a free market involves making bids.

The Bible says that women possess the right to own property and also the right to make bids. "She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard" (Prov. 31:16). There is no escape from this Bible-based conclusion: *there is no covenantal male-female hierarchy in economics*. The economy is not a covenantal institution; it is contractual. No self-maledictory oath under God establishes the economy. Certain effects of the male-female hierarchy may at times influence economics because of innate gender differences or family concerns. Such considerations can and do influence the array of prices in a free market. Biblically, however, the male-female hierarchy must not be imposed on the free market by politics, which itself is not bound by any male-female hierarchical principle, as the example of Deborah the judge indicates. In family and church, the male-female hierarchy is mandated by biblical law, but not in civil government and the economy.

Conclusion

There are prices that must be paid and costs that must be borne in order for covenant-keepers to maintain the male-female hierarchy in family and church. The free market enables legally responsible adults to count costs more accurately. This is what Jesus recommended: count the costs (Luke 14:28–30).[12] To blame the free market for imposing certain costs is to blame freedom for imposing costs. Christians are called into freedom, not into servitude (I Cor. 7:21).[13] The costs associated with freedom must be borne by free people under God. *Freedom means that mammon will make his bids ever-more clearly*. This fact should not become an excuse for imposing political restric-

12. North, *Treasure and Dominion*, ch. 35.
13. Chapter 8.

tions on the God-given legal right of adults to buy, sell, and make bids to buy or sell, unless a transaction is identified by the Bible as being both inherently immoral and prohibited by civil law. In such rare cases, the legal issue is immorality, not the male-female hierarchy.

The right of legally responsible adults to make bids must be defended by civil law in a biblical commonwealth. This means that neither gender-based equality of economic opportunity nor gender-based inequality of economic opportunity should be mandated by civil law. Nevertheless, Christians should recognize that the free market is a greater threat to those who seek to maintain gender-based inequality than to those who seek to legislate gender-based equality. It was the free market, not egalitarian socialism, that produced the light switch.

16

THE DIVISION OF LABOR

> *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*
>
> I CORINTHIANS 12:4–7

The theocentric principle here is the unity and the diversity of the church in God. This has to do with the church's boundaries: point three of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. The One and the Many

This chapter parallels Romans 12.[2] It deals with the unity and diversity of the church. There is unity despite the fact that its members are different from each other. They individually reflect various aspects of God. They represent God in history, both as individuals and in their corporate capacity as members. Covenant-keepers represent Christ in the church. Paul's two-fold concern in this passage is with the unity of the church and the diversity of gifts given to its members. Paul offers an extended analogy of the church as a body.

> For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles,

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 3. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 3.

2. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 9.

> whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked (I Cor. 12:12–24).

We read something similar in Romans:

> For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness (Rom. 12:4–8).

What I wrote in chapter 9 of my commentary on Romans[3] also applies to chapter 12 in I Corinthians.

Membership today means "belongs to." People are members of clubs, associations, teams, and churches. The original meaning of "member" is closer to Paul's metaphor: an appendage of a body. This usage is not common today. Because of this, the metaphor has lost much of its power. It is still a useful metaphor. Paul describes the church as a living organism, a body. He does not say it is like a living organism. He does not offer an analogy. He says that we are members of a living organism. The church's members participate in a society called the church, but Paul describes it as a body. Members in

3. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012).

a judicial sense he describes as members in a biological sense. Paul does not describe church members as cogs in a great machine. He describes them as appendages—members—of a body.

Sociologist Robert Nisbet observed that "The organism serves not only as a model of growth for contemplating the world, but also as a model of structure, of the articulation of separate entities, such as the heart and lungs. To emphasize the harmonious interaction of parts in an organization, it is customary to use 'organic' as highest praise."[4] Metaphors of organic change are more commonly used than metaphors of mechanical change. This may be because mechanical change is cyclical. A machine does not grow. It performs a limited task over and over. A machine has no sensations. A person does not normally look at a broken machine and then make a comparison with himself. He does not see a broken machine rusting in a junk yard, and think to himself, "How terrifying!" A machine has a maker, an owner, or a user, but it has no head. A body has a head. A body develops through time. This is why the organic metaphor is far more powerful than mechanism for describing social processes or organizations.

As surely as a body dies without a head, so does an institution die without leadership. It may merely flounder at first. The phrase, "running around like a chicken with its head cut off," is used to describe an organization that has no leadership. It runs around aimlessly before it dies. But, of course, organizations do not literally run around. They have no feet. Either they stay in operation or they close. The question is: Does an organization operate in terms of a shared vision? A leader must articulate this vision and impose sanctions in terms of it. For a hierarchy to function, there must be a representative figure who speaks with authority, and who the makes decisions to delegate part of this authority. There must be a hierarchy in order to gain the advantages of the division of labor. Institutional cooperation is structured by a hierarchy with a representative figure who possesses the authority to impose sanctions.

Paul describes Christ as the head of the church. This head cannot die, nor can the body, which extends into eternity (Rev. 21; 22). But this body can lose appendages. A body that is missing an appendage does not function as well as a body with all of its appendages. If an appendage does not work properly, the body suffers. Paul calls on members of the church to do their work well. This will benefit the

4. Robert Nisbet, *Prejudices: A Philosophical Dictionary* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 219.

church even as a body benefits from healthy appendages. Paul expects his readers to understand what he is getting at: strife is bad for a church. He calls them to righteous behavior. "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:9–13).[5]

There are conceptual weaknesses with organic metaphors that describe institutions. Unless organic metaphors are carefully qualified, they are not perceived as judicial; they become merely functional. *The covenantal issues of life are judicial*. It is not simply that an institution has a leader. The leader serves representatively: between the organization and the individuals who lawfully own it.

Paul could have limited his language to strictly judicial categories. He could also have invoked the image of a family. He did neither. What is it about a body that is so powerful an image? I suggest that the economic principle of the division of labor is best understood in terms of an organic metaphor. We can easily understand the operation of a social organization when it is described as a body. A body that experiences conflict among its members may become helpless. A person whose body suffers epileptic seizures is unreliable. A person who suffers from spastic discoordination is limited in what he can do. People see such afflictions in others and shudder. "What if I were so afflicted?" It frightens them. The affliction is of a specific kind: discoordination. Paul takes this common fear and makes use of it. How terrible when a church suffers from conflicts. This discoordination threatens to paralyze the church. He is making a comparison: if you fear becoming physically afflicted in such a way, you should fear that the church of Christ should become similarly afflicted. Paul wants Christians to regard strife in the church as they would regard epileptic seizures. Christians should not take lightly such disruptions inside the church.

B. Joint Productivity, Joint Service

Paul says that we possess different gifts, "gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us." This diversity of gifts is a benefit to

5. Paul established hospitality as a requirement for every candidate to the office of bishop (I Tim. 3:2). Gary North, *Hierarchy and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Timothy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2003] 2012), ch. 4.

the church. The church has within its membership people with many kinds of abilities. They can offer their gifts to the church in faithful service. The church is then in a position to offer to its members and to the world a wide range of assistance. The church becomes a clearing house for a diversity of services. The larger the church grows, the greater its range of services.

The same principle of organization operates in the world outside the institutional church. An increasing division of labor is a major benefit to a society. Men have been given many different skills and insights. A social order that encourages people to offer their services for sale to others is able to increase the wealth of its participants, meaning an increasing range of choices. Adam Smith, in chapter 1 of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), relied on the principle of the division of labor to explain how people can increase their personal wealth through voluntary exchange and production for a market.

The institutional church is not a profit-seeking entity. It is funded by the tithes and donations of its members, not by profit. It offers healing of all kinds to its members, beginning with physical healing. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14). Service begins with love. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34–35). "Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" (Rom. 12:16). As the church grows, more people are brought into the community of saints. Some of them have needs that they cannot satisfy outside the covenant community. Others possess abilities that can meet the needs of others. The church enables those with needs to gain the help required to restore them. As they become restored to health in the widest sense, they can become sources of aid to those who are not yet healthy.

Covenant-keepers serve Christ by serving each other. This is true inside the institutional church and outside. Then what is unique or different about the institutional church? Answer: it alone offers the sacraments. God's special judicial presence in the sacraments is unique. Participation in sacramental rites brings God's people under God's judgment. Sanctions are dispensed to its members by God as a direct result of their participation in the sacraments. These sanc-

tions can be positive[6] or negative.[7] A sense of community is one result of participation in the sacraments. Church members participate in a community that has been called by God to leave a world that is ultimately perishing, yet they must return to this perishing world when the worship service ends. Their worship inside is designed to make them better citizens outside. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). Formal worship strengthens them in their status as residents of two worlds: eternity and time. Jesus prayed publicly to His Father: "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:14–18).

Paul in Romans 12 calls his readers to faithful service inside the institutional church. His goal is to persuade his readers to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to Christ (v. 1). The starting point for their sacrificial service is the institutional church. The proper motivational impulse is charity, not earthly profit.

The division of labor aids church members in their ability to serve each other. Each member knows that there are other members who possess skills that may benefit him sometime. He can put his mind at greater rest because the church includes people who are willing to serve each other. The church in this respect seems more like a family than a body, yet Paul describes the church in terms of a body. It is almost if he is reluctant to encourage his readers to associate the church with the family. A family is the more obvious mental association, yet Paul uses a metaphor instead: body. Otherwise, many people would be tempted to proclaim the structure of a family to serve as a model for the church. The church is not a family.[8] It has sacraments. A family does not. The church extends into heaven. Men there have access to the ultimate sacrament, the tree of life. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). A family does not continue in heaven.

6. "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

7. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (I Cor. 11:30).

8. Gary North, *Baptized Patriarchalism: The Cult of the Family* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1995).

"For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matt. 22:30).

A church member knows that whatever he lacks, others in the church may possess. The larger the church or association of churches, the more likely that there will be providers of every kind of service. A member does not have to master every area of service, which is beyond his abilities. He need only concentrate on the limited range of services that he performs best. The same message appears in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12.

C. The Institutional Church

Paul is not speaking here of the church in the sense of believers in general, i.e., the invisible church. He is speaking of the body of Christ as an identifiable organization that uniquely represents Christ in history and eternity. Paul's audience was a group of Christians who were assembled together to hear the reading of his letter. This organization had members. It had a structure: hierarchy. This hierarchy had sanctions. The focus of his concern in this section is the smooth functioning of an institution.

The body of Christ represents Christ visibly in a way that the family and the civil government do not. This is why the church extends into eternity. The family and civil government do not. This means that the central institution in God's kingdom is the church. Sociological analysis often begins with the family. The idea of the centrality of the family is not a biblical principle. It is far more pagan than Christian. It places biological relationships above sacramental relationships. It places loyalty to death-bound people above loyalty to the resurrected Christ, who is represented in history by His body. Jesus severely condemned the idea of family loyalty's being superior to loyalty to Him. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:34–37). The idea of the centrality of the state is socialist. This ideal, too, is in conflict with the biblical principle of the centrality of the church. It is the church alone that lawfully offers the dual covenantal oath-signs of baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are eternal sanctions, not just temporal.

The state can represent Christ judicially. So can the family. But both institutions can also represent other worldviews, other gods. The church is uniquely Christ's. The sacraments are judicial oath signs that point uniquely to God's final judgment. The sanctions that are imposed by family and state do not uniquely point to God's final judgment. Excommunication—separation from the sacraments—judicially represents hell. Paul never uses the following language with respect to family or state. "For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Cor. 5:3–5).

Family and state sanctions do not covenantally deliver a man's body to Satan, nor do they involve a man's spirit. Family and state are common grace institutions. Their covenantal blessings are available to all people irrespective of their personal confessions. The church is a special grace institution that is lawfully open only to those who confess Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2).

The church is the body of Christ. It has many members, Paul said. It possesses unity. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). It also possesses diversity: "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us." Each member is to serve God by serving others. This fulfills Paul's initial command: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

The division of labor strengthens the church. It creates a broad range of talents and services. Individuality is affirmed by this broad range of talents, yet institutional unity is also established: a more self-sufficient entity.

Paul places no restrictions on either this diversity or this unity. He does not suggest that members should not cooperate with each other. The range of services is limited only by the size of the church. There is no indication that the church is to be broken into non-cooperating subdivisions. On the contrary, the church is Christ's body. It cannot be broken up into non-cooperating subdivisions without injuring it.

The range of the division of labor is limited only by the size of the church. The church is international. The division of labor within the church is international. In the midst of international violence, there should be a beacon of peace. In the midst of noncooperation among peoples and nations, there should be an example of cooperation. The church is designed by God to be the premier example. When it is not the premier example, then either it is at fault or the observers are.

D. Offices and Gifts

Paul concludes I Corinthians 12 with a list of ecclesiastical gifts. He moves from metaphor to description. "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way" (I Cor. 12:28–31).

The first office listed is apostle. This office no longer exists. There are still obscure Protestant sects or independent congregations whose leaders claim that they are apostles. They do not make it clear what distinguishes the office of apostle from the office of prophet, nor do they explain how someone gains this office, or what his distinguishing abilities are, or why an apostle should be removed or even can be removed for malfeasance, or how the office is passed on institutionally.

Next comes the office of prophet. Ever since the completion of the New Testament's documents and the necessary cessation of authoritative revelation equal to these documents, this office has not existed. There are still men and women who claim that they are prophets. The same comments apply to this office as apply to apostle.

Next comes the teacher. Churches do not usually recognize it as a separate office from pastor. Paul here does not mention presbyters or deacons. So, he is not dealing here with issues of judicial hierarchy. He is dealing with the diversity of gifts. "After that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."

The greater the diversity of gifts in any organization, the greater is its potential division of labor. The greater the division of labor, the greater the level of output from the same quantity of inputs. Paul is saying that a church's members should welcome the large diversity of

gifts that is found within its membership. Church members who do not possess any of these gifts of office are nevertheless benefited by the presence in the church of those who do. The church as an institution can accomplish more when the members without these unique gifts cooperate with those who possess them.

This is why both envy and jealousy are terrible sins. They undermine social cooperation. Jealousy is resentment at another person's advantages, coupled with the desire to force the other person to share his advantages. Envy is resentment against another person's advantages, coupled with a desire to remove those advantages without gaining access to them. Jealousy seeks a levelling based on a redistribution of assets in favor of the jealous person. Envy seeks a levelling based on the removal or the destruction of the other person's advantages.[9] Both involve tearing down. Jealousy delights in both the tearing down and the subsequent redistribution of assets. Envy delights merely in the tearing down. Ahab was jealous of Naboth's vineyard. "And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread" (I Kings 21:4). The Philistines were envious of Isaac's wells. "For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth" (Gen. 26:15).[10] There was no cooperation between Naboth and Ahab or between the Philistines and Isaac. There was only conflict. Naboth and Isaac were innocent.

The church in the broadest sense possesses a great diversity of gifts. A local congregation may not. As in the case of specialized profit-seeking organizations, churches specialize. They concentrate on what they do best. They evangelize different segments of society. They develop traditions that emphasize their particular specialties. This has been going on from the early church era, but as the church has spread its influence across borders and social groups, local congregations have grown very different from others. The same kind of tolerance that Paul tells the Corinthians to display toward one another is to be displayed by churches toward one another. *The funda-*

9. On the distinction between jealousy and envy, see Helmut Schoeck, *Envy: A Theory of Social Behavior* (New York: Harcourt Brace, [1966] 1970), pp. 5, 13, 14, 71, 96.

10. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 27.

mental issue is confession of faith. This statement reflects the theological tradition known as Calvinism. Other traditions emphasize other core issues: the sacraments or emotional enthusiasm or forms of liturgy. But Jesus settled this issue long ago: *confession is central*.

> He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:15–19).

The church as an international organization possesses a multitude of gifts. The larger it grows, the greater the diversity of gifts that its members possess. This is why church growth is an imperative. It increases the efficiency of covenant-keepers as they seek to fulfill the terms of the dominion covenant (Gen. 1:26–28).[11]

E. The Social Division of Labor

The language of organic unity is often applied to society. We think of ourselves as members of society. We are less likely to think of ourselves as cogs in a great machine, except insofar as we perceive that we have lost too much of our independence. Yet the member of a body does not perceive itself apart from the body. It is an "it," not a sentient being. So, what is the difference in principle between a machine and a body? I think the distinguishing feature is life. A member can grow; a cog cannot. A body can grow; a machine cannot. A body has a representative head; a machine does not.

What is the basis of growth in a society? Not biological law. But this comment also applies to the church. There have been social theorists who have sought to discover the permanent laws of society, as if society were biological. Their success has been minimal, as is testified to by all of the other social theorists who also claim to have discovered the laws of society, but whose laws are different.

Certain varieties of political theory have sought to identify a head for society. Monarchy lends itself to such a formulation, but there are no monarchs today who possess such overarching headship or even

11. *Ibid.*, chaps. 3, 4.

claim it. Political theory moves from the organic analogy to judicial categories as soon as it confronts the problem of the head. The issues of sanctions—voting—also move political theory away from organicism. This is also true of theories of the church. The language may be organic; the categories are judicial.

This concept of corporate interdependence applies to social organization in general, but especially to the free market. The free market integrates the plans and productivity of legally sovereign individuals—an amazing achievement—and thereby provides continuity through time. The free market integrates the one and the many by means of private ownership, the legal right to make offers to exchange scarce resources, the legal enforcement of contracts, and the price system. The legal right of ownership, including the right to bid, produces an enormously complex and productive society. Few people recognize or understand the cause-and-effect connection between private ownership and social cooperation. The system operates nonetheless.

In a free market economy, there is no overall chain of command. A major appeal of socialist theory has been its concept of a rational hierarchy. A central planning agency is seen as functioning as a head functions. But, as Ludwig von Mises pointed out in 1920, this head is not omniscient. It cannot plan rationally because, under socialism, there is no private ownership, especially of capital goods. There is no price system, so the planners cannot know what the price of scarce resources should be in order to maximize the value to society of whatever resources exist. A price system is a system of competitive bidding by individuals who possess the legal right to buy and sell and make offers to buy and sell. Such rights do not exist in a systematically socialist society. Therefore, Mises concluded, economic calculation is impossible under socialism.[12] There were several attempts to refute his theory, most notably by the Communist economist, Oskar Lange.[13] Lange's theory of a national planning board that could set prices and change them in response to shortages or surpluses was never adopted by any socialist or Communist society. His theory offered too much authority to customers. In Communist Poland, Lange served as chief

12. Ludwig von Mises, "Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth" (1920), in F. A. Hayek (ed.), *Collectivist Economic Planning* (London: Routledge, 1935). His essay is here: mises.org/library/economic-calculation-socialist-commonwealth (accessed January 16, 2021).

13. Oskar Lange, *On the Economic Theory of Socialism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964). This is a reprint of Lange's articles that appeared in the *Review of Economic Studies*, IV (1936–37).

economist, beginning in the late 1940s. He was the architect of Communist Eastern Europe's system of accounts. His system never incorporated his theory.

The free market's system of market pricing solves most of the practical problems of reconciling the one and the many, i.e., reconciling individual benefits and aggregate social benefits. But, in the realm of economic theory, the various theories offered by humanist economists have not solved the ethical issue or even the theoretical issue of the one and the many. From the days of Adam Smith, free market economists have pointed to the great advantage of the free market: encouraging greater individual output through an appeal to individual self-interest. Free market theorists have argued that greater individual output benefits all or at least most members of society, not just those who are directly involved in exchange. This, they have yet to prove, given their presupposition of methodological individualism. In order to say anything scientifically valid about social utility assumes that the economist can add and subtract individual utilities to produce an assessment of aggregate social utility. This necessarily assumes that it is possible to make scientifically valid interpersonal comparisons of subjective utility. Because most free market theorists since the mid-1930s have followed Lionel Robbins in his argument that it is impossible scientifically to make interpersonal comparisons of subjective utility, they have found no way theoretically to justify any statement regarding the free market and social utility. Economists make such assessments all the time when they recommend policies to governments, but they do so only inconsistently. They violate their own methodological individualism when they make such assessments and recommendations. There can be no concept of social utility in a world where it is impossible to make interpersonal comparisons of subjective utility.[14]

In 1956, Murray Rothbard made an attempt to derive a theory of social benefit based on voluntary exchange.[15] He argued that if two people make an exchange, they do so because they think they will

14. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, ch. 5; Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 3, *Tools of Dominion* (1990) , Appendix H.

15. Murray N. Rothbard, "Toward a Reconstruction of Utility and Welfare Economics," in Mary Sennholz (ed.), *On Freedom and Free Enterprise: Essays in Honor of Ludwig von Mises* (Princeton, New Jersey: Van Nostrand, 1956). This has been reprinted by Liberty Press, Indianapolis, Indiana. It also appears in Rothbard, *The Logic of Action Two: Applications and Criticism from the Austrian School* (Glos, United Kingdom: Elgar, 1997), pp. 211–54.

be better off after the exchange. Their individual utilities therefore increase. This assumes that after the exchange, they still think they are better off than they were before the exchange. This also assumes that no one else is hurt by their exchange. But an envious person may perceive his individual utility as having decreased because two people are made better off by an exchange. What if his decrease in social utility more than offsets the increase experienced by the exchangers? Rothbard dealt with this theoretical problem by denying the verifiable existence of envy. That is, he defined away the theoretical problem. In 1971, he changed his view of envy. He became an enthusiastic promoter of Helmut Schoeck's thesis in Schoeck's book, *Envy: A Theory of Social Behavior* (1966).[16] Schoeck argues that envy has been an important motivation behind socialism. But as soon as he accepted the existence of envy, Rothbard destroyed the theoretical case that he had made in favor of a utility theory based on mutual exchange. He never dealt with this logical inconsistency over the next quarter of a century.

The biblical solution to this problem is the concept of methodological covenantalism. God deals with men in their capacity as individuals. He also judges corporate units to which men belong and in which they are represented by other men. God holds individuals responsible for their actions, but He also brings judgments in history on corporate entities (Lev. 26;[17] Deut. 28[18]). He imputes value to men's actions, both as individuals and corporate groups. God makes judgments in history and also retroactively at the final judgment. Thus, we can say confidently that the reconciliation of the one and the many is found in God's perfect judgment. As an individual acting on his own behalf and also as a representative of a group, it is each man's unavoidable responsibility to make judgments in history based on his present estimate of God's final retroactive judgment on his actions.

Christians can legitimately conclude that any economic order that results when men obey God's laws will reconcile the one and the many in the realm of scarce resources. We read in chapter 12 of both

16. Murray N. Rothbard, "Freedom, Inequality, Primitivism and the Division of Labor," *Modern Age* (Summer 1971); reprinted in Rothbard, *The Logic of Action Two: Applications and Criticism from the Austrian School*, pp. 3–35. This essay is posted on-line at mises.org/fipandol.asp (accessed January 16, 2021).

17. Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), chaps. 34, 35.

18. Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1999] 2012), chaps, 69, 70.

Romans and First Corinthians that the division of labor is good for the church. We can legitimately extend this assessment to the economy. What is good for church members in the church—the division of labor—is good for individuals in the economy. The division of labor is a benefit to men in society whenever it is based on the private ownership of the means of production, except when the specialty is identified as immortal by the Bible.

Conclusion

Paul describes the church as a body and its members as members. So ingrained is his language today that we speak of church members, but the meaning has changed since Paul's day. We speak of church membership as if it were little more than joining a club, but the concept of church membership encompasses far more than formal belonging. Church membership is described by Paul as being organic. Church members are members of a body. Without organic union, the body ceases to function properly. It begins to die.

The power of Paul's metaphor of a body with members is very great. We seem to be able to understand it better than we understand such concepts as the division of labor or oath-bound subordination to a representative entity. The essence of the church is judicial-covenantal, but Paul's analogy points to cooperation, like the parts (members) of a body.

We belong to the church in much the same way as members of a body belong to each other. This is not the way that members of a club belong to each other. The church is far more significant. This means that we cannot do without each other without suffering individual losses.

17

ESCHATOLOGY AND CAPITAL ACCUMULATION

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

I CORINTHIANS 15:21–28

The theocentric principle here is the complete historical triumph of God over His enemies in history. This is eschatology: point five of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. Resurrection and Historical Continuity

The literal bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ in history is the starting point for this chapter. Paul writes, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (vv. 3–4). Christ's burial was literal. His body was placed in the tomb by Joseph of Ari-

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 5. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1988] 2010), ch. 5.

mathea (Matt. 27:57–60). Christ's resurrection was equally literal. His body was removed from the tomb, but not by any human being, for a great stone had been placed in front of the tomb's entrance by the authorities (Matt. 27:62–66). Christ's resurrection was not symbolic, meaning mythical, meaning a lie perpetrated by early Christian writers for the sake of deceiving the public, which is what liberal theologians would have us believe. The risen Jesus had hundreds of witnesses. "And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep" (I Cor. 15:5–6). When Paul testified before the Roman governor, Festus, he said, "For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26).

So crucial is the doctrine of Christ's bodily resurrection in history, that Paul says twice that the Christian's faith is in vain if this doctrine is not historically accurate. "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (v. 14). "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (v. 17).

The doctrine of Christ's bodily resurrection serves as Paul's introduction to a discussion of eschatology: the last things and the next-to-last things. Christ was resurrected from the dead; His followers will also be resurrected from the dead. "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen" (vv. 12–13). Christ is risen; hence, there will be a future resurrection of the dead, who in life placed their trust in the historical life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our hope is not confined to this life. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (v. 19).

Paul in this chapter discusses the final judgment. He says that God's final judgment will be characterized by an eschatological discontinuity: incorruption will inherit a redeemed world. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (vv. 42–44). The distinction here is between corruption and incorruption. Life prior to the final resurrection, the final judgment, and the establishment of the post-resurrection New Heaven and New Earth

(Rev. 21; 22), is marked by corruption. All men in history are in sin. Sin affects everything men think and do. They cannot escape this corruption by sin in history. They cannot experience complete victory over sin in history. Death still rules them, no matter how long they live. There is only one deliverance from sin and its effects, i.e., God's sanctions on sin: final judgment for covenant-keepers. Wherever sin exists, sickness and death remain. Wherever sickness and death exist, sin remains. The end is not yet.

Resurrection was *definitive* in history: the resurrection of Jesus Christ is past. "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (vv. 12–14).

Resurrection is *progressive* in history: spiritual. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (vv. 57–58).

Resurrection will be *final*. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law" (vv. 50–56).

The literal truth of Christ's bodily resurrection in the past, and the literal truth of mankind's final resurrection in the future, must both be affirmed without qualification by any Christian who desires to defend orthodoxy and avoid heresy. Christians, East and West, have confessed the following for centuries: "The third day, He arose from the dead, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father almighty, from whence He shall come to judge the quick [living] and the dead." We call this confession the Apostles' Creed. It has long served the church as a major judicial standard of orthodoxy. The Nicene Creed (325)

has a similar statement. "On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end."

All of this has to do with Christ's judgment against sin: at Calvary, in history through His covenantal representatives, and at the end of history. The resurrection was, is, and will be preliminary to public judgment by Christ against sin and its effects.

The Christian's acts of exercising judgment are affirmations of the bodily resurrection, past and future. The Christian, through decision-making, is supposed to extend God's kingdom in history. He is told by God to overcome the effects of sin in his own life and in those areas of life that are lawfully under his covenantal jurisdiction. He is to bring judgment against sin progressively. This is what Paul meant when he wrote to the Philippians, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). This is what he meant when he told them, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13–14).[2]

The continuity of Christians' individual and corporate exercise of judgment in history culminates in the eschatological discontinuity of Christ's final overcoming of sin's historical effects at the final judgment. The lake of fire will be God's overcoming of sin's effects eternally (Rev. 20:14–15). The efforts of Christians in history do not bring about this eschatological discontinuity. Their continuity is the continuity of definitive incorruption's progressive overcoming of corruption in history. But the discontinuity of incorruption's final inheritance and corruption's final disinheritance will be exclusively the supernatural work of Christ, when he will end history by finally overcoming death, God's original negative sanction against sin (Gen. 2:17). On that day, but not before, we will be able legitimately to declare, "O death, where is thy sting?" That is because we will also be able legitimately to declare, "O sin, where is thy power?" and "O, corruption, where is thy inheritance?" This event still lies in the future.[3]

2. Gary North, *Ethics and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on the Epistles* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 21.

3. Appendix A.

B. Millennial Viewpoints

The major divisive issue in Christian eschatology is the sequence of events that will precede the final resurrection of the dead. One highly divisive question in this regard is this: Will there be a major historical discontinuity prior to the general resurrection at Christ's second coming? Specifically, will Christians be removed from history prior to the second coming, as premillennial, pre-tribulational dispensationalists teach? That is, will what dispensationalists call the Rapture, or the secret Rapture, of Christians take place approximately one thousand years prior to the final judgment?

1. Wheat and Tares Together

Jesus categorically denied this. In his parable of the tares and the wheat, He made it plain that Christians and non-Christians will operate in history together until the end of time.

> Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn (Matt. 13:24–30).[4]

The disciples were not sure what this meant. They came to Him later and asked for clarification. He provided it.

> He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear (Matt. 13:37–43).

4. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 29.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Millions of pre-tribulational, premillennial dispensationalists have refused to hear ever since 1830, when their eschatology first appeared. So committed are they to the idea that Christians will be removed from the burdens of history either 1,007 years or 1,003.5 years before the final judgment, that they have refused to accept Christ's explicit warning that no such removal will ever take place in history. They have ears to hear, but they do not hear. They seek an escape from history and its burdens.

Jesus said that there will be historical continuity for tares and wheat, living side by side, until the final judgment. Christians who refuse to begin with this premise cannot accurately understand the future of Christianity. They cannot understand what God has called His followers to do in history: conquer the world on behalf of Christ as His covenantal representatives. They dismiss such views as "triumphalism," as if triumphalism were not the essence of the twin doctrines of Christ's bodily resurrection and bodily ascension in history. They regard triumphalism with respect to culture as ridiculous or even heretical, yet they regard triumphalism with respect to Christ's victory over physical death as basic Christian theology. Christ publicly demonstrated His authority to forgive sin by means of His ability to tell a cripple to get up and walk, which the cripple immediately did (Matt. 9:2–8). Christ's spiritual authority over sin in general was manifested publicly by His visible authority over one effect of sin in general: healing a physical disability. Nevertheless, both the premillennialist and the amillennialist insist that Christianity will never manifest publicly, by means of Christianity's progressive triumph over cultural evil in history, the truth of Christ's bodily ascension to the right hand of God and His present reign over history.

2. Future Longevity

In contrast, the prophesied continuity of historical victory for Christianity involves a social transformation so great that the life spans of men will begin to approach those that prevailed before Moses announced this rule: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Ps. 90:10). Isaiah announced that, sometime in the future, sinners dying at age one hundred will be regarded as children. Jerusalem will rejoice.

> For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for

> ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed (Isa 65:17–20).[5]

This prophecy cannot possibly refer to the post-resurrection world, for in the era described by Isaiah, there will be sinners living and dying. This passage refutes amillennialism[6] as surely as the parable of the tares and wheat in Matthew 13 refutes pre-tribulational and mid-tribulational dispensationalism.[7] The amillennialist affirms historical continuity, but this continuity is a continuity of earthly defeat for Christianity. He says that there will never be a time when Christianity will rule the world. Always, he insists, Christians will be under the dominion of covenant-breakers.[8]

According to pre-tribulational, premillennial dispensationalism, Christianity will experience defeat culturally in this, the pre-millennial era of history. This defeat will be reversed only after Christ returns bodily to set up His earthly millennial kingdom seven years after the Rapture. At the Rapture, wheat and tares will be separated by divine intervention: the wheat will be removed from history. This will be a great discontinuity. There will be a continuity of defeat for Christianity until the Rapture's discontinuity of deliverance out of history. According to amillennialism, Christianity also experiences defeat culturally. There is a continuity of defeat until the Second Coming's discontinuity of deliverance out of history. Premillennialism and amillennialism are both highly pessimistic regarding our era, the era of the church.[9]

In historic premillennialism, which is not dispensational, there is no separation of the wheat from the tares prior to the final judgment. There is a great discontinuity, however: the bodily re-entry into history of Jesus Christ and (depending on the theologian involved) His angels. This is consistent with the parable of the wheat and tares: no separation. But it maintains an inherent pessimism regarding Chris-

5. Gary North, *Restoration and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on the Prophets* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 15.

6. Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), pp. 98–106.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 296–98.

8. *Ibid.*, ch. 5.

9. *Ibid.*, ch. 4.

tianity's influence during our pre-millennial era. It teaches a continuity of defeat for Christianity until the great discontinuity of Christ's second coming, which supposedly will take place 1,000 years before the final judgment. The discontinuity of Christ's bodily return will presumably establish a new continuity of victory for Christianity, one based on Christ's leadership over an international bureaucracy run by Christians. But this future victory has nothing or very little to do with the efforts of Christians—including you—prior to Christ's second coming and His establishment of an earthly millennial kingdom.

3. Questions of Social Order

The crucial question here is the issue of institutional continuity between the pre-millennial age—ours—and a future millennial age. We are told by premillennialists of all varieties that Christ will someday return to earth to rule in person. This view of Christ's millennial kingdom raises once again the problem faced by Moses, who ruled Israel by means of God's perfect and direct revelation. A long line of judgment-seekers formed in front of his tent and remained there all day long (Ex. 18:13).[10] In premillennial social theory, there is a practical and presently unanswered question regarding the judicial effects of a discontinuity of perfection vs. imperfection within the worldwide hierarchy of judicial authority, with sinners governing at the bottom, and Jesus governing from the top. Jesus will be far more busy than Moses was. Moses ruled only over Israel. Jesus will rule over the whole world. There are just so many hours in the day. How will the hierarchical chain of courts operate—church courts and civil courts? What civil laws will predominate? Natural laws? Biblical laws? Some mixture?

Then there is the matter of church courts. Will Baptists still insist on church independency when Jesus is there to settle the difficult ecclesiastical cases? Which higher regional church court will lawfully rule on disputes within a local congregation? Will Presbyterians and Episcopalians serve as judges in these higher church courts? How can ecclesiastical independency survive in a system of church courts that is constructed along the lines of Exodus 18's civil court model? Or is Jesus expected to settle in person every dispute in every local Baptist church? (Jesus would then be *very* busy!) These judicial questions are never, ever discussed in print by premillennialists. These questions are much too practical.

10. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 1, *Representation and Dominion* (1985), ch. 19.

4. Institutional Continuity

There is another question regarding this future discontinuity: the transition between today's institutions and the institutions of the millennial era. Historic premillennialists and post-tribulation dispensationalists do not write about this transition, nor do pre-tribulation and mid-tribulation dispensationalists. That is to say, premillennialists rarely write about social theory at all. When they do comment on social theory, they do not use the Bible to defend their social recommendations.[11] They do not discuss the institutional implications of whether or not Jesus will be assisted on earth by angels, or by resurrected, sin-free Christians, or merely by sin-cursed Christians. Thus, they offer no answer to this vitally important social question:

> "Is there any significant continuity—intellectual, theological, financial, institutional—between our pre-millennial era and the millennial era to come?"

This is the question that premillennialist social theorists must answer in detail before they can develop a concept of premillennial institution-building that should be funded today by thrifty Christians. This question of the degree of institutional continuity or discontinuity must be dealt with forthrightly and in detail by premillennialist theologians before they or their academic followers can provide Bible-based opinions concerning the degree of future-orientation that is appropriate for today's Christians.

In the 1950s, the pre-tribulational, Los Angeles-based radio preacher-pastor J. Vernon McGee dismissed all social action programs (except presumably for urban rescue missions and foreign medical missions) with this clever and socially debilitating phrase: "You don't polish brass on a sinking ship."[12] Was he correct about the uselessness of brass-polishing? Given his eschatological views, he was correct, but his eschatological views were incorrect. I ask: Is it a waste of Christians' scarce economic resources for them to finance explicitly Bible-based universities, academic research foundations, medical science, political action organizations, and all of the other institutions that provide social leadership and social transformation? These are the institutions that humanists have either taken over from Christians or built on their own ever since 1700, because Bible-believing Protestant Christians have either defected from such tasks or

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 74–75.
12. I discuss this in greater detail in *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 29.

have never been involved. Amillennialists and premillennialists, if they had the courage of their convictions, would say "yes, polishing brass is a waste of resources." J. Vernon McGee still speaks from the grave on behalf of all consistent pessimillennialists. Pre-tribulation dispensationalism has never offered anything beyond the social theory of the rescue mission.[13]

First, in contrast to the institutional discontinuity of premillennialism, postmillennialism teaches continuity from our era until the final judgment. More specifically, postmillennialism teaches that there will be neither a Rapture nor the bodily return of Christ to set up an earthly kingdom approximately one thousand years prior to the final judgment. Only the future conversion of the Jews will create a significant historical discontinuity (Rom. 11), which will be positive for Christianity, but will not involve a change in Christ's present reign from heaven.[14] Christ will still extend His earthly dominion representatively through His invisible church—Christians—but not in person, just as He has done since His ascension to the right hand of God.[15]

Second, in contrast to the institutional continuity of amillennialism, which has been a continuity of Christianity's progressive defeat culturally, postmillennialism teaches a continuity of victory for Christianity, in time and on earth. Postmillennialism teaches that there will be a literal fulfillment in history of Isaiah's prophecy regarding the New Heaven and the New Earth (Isa. 65:17–20). Postmillennialism offers Christians the possibility of both social theory and economic theory based on the moral legitimacy and eschatological necessity of compound growth for Christianity.

C. Psalm 110 Revisited

Psalm 110 is the most frequently cited Old Testament passage in the New Testament. It is short.

> A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

13. Gary North, *Rapture Fever: Why Dispensationalism Is Paralyzed* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1993), ch. 3, section on "Institutional Defeat?"

14. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 6.

15. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1992] 1997).

> The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head (Ps. 110:1–7).

Verse 4, "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek," is the basis of the argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews that Jesus fulfilled this prophecy (Heb. 5:5–10). There is now a new priesthood, the author argues, for Jesus was part of the tribe of Judah, not Levi (Heb. 7).

The first verse of Psalm 110 is a familiar one. Jesus cited it in His final challenge to the Pharisees.

> What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions (Matt. 22:42–46).

Psalm 110 speaks of a footstool. God will place His feet on His enemies, as if they were corporately a footstool. He will rule over them. The psalm then describes the nature of the rule of God. The language of victory is military. "He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries" (v. 6).

Paul in this chapter picks up the theme of the footstool. "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (v. 25). Who is "he"? Jesus Christ. When will He reign? Before the end of time. After He has put all of His enemies under His feet, then the end will come. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power" (v. 24). Paul's language could not be clearer. The reign of Christ is in history, prior to His final victory over His enemies. What is the last enemy to be defeated before the end? "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (v. 26). There can be no mistake about this: Christ's reign in history parallels the reign of death. *As surely as death is present today, so does Christ presently reign in history*.

A debate over eschatology has long existed over this question: Must Christ return bodily in order to establish His millennial reign in history? The premillennialist says yes. But the parable of the wheat and

tares in Matthew 13 eliminates the exegetical basis of both mid-tribulational and pre-tribulational dispensationalism, both of which teach that the church will be removed from history for a few years prior to the bodily return of Christ to set up His earthly millennial kingdom. This leaves historic premillennialism and (possibly) post-tribulational dispensationalism as contenders in the eschatological debate.[16] But I Corinthians 15 removes them from the debate. Christ's reign in history will be the same in the future as it is today, until death is finally defeated at the final judgment.[17] His rule in history will continue to be representative. He will continue to reign from heaven. He will not leave His position of cosmic eminence at the right hand of God until the final judgment that will end history.

The amillennialist would also like to remain in the debate, but Isaiah's teaching regarding the New Heaven and the New Earth removes him from the debate, unless he denies the literal truth of the prophecy regarding an era without tears and with extended life spans. This is a difficult exegetical position to defend, for it makes publicly unverifiable Isaiah's prophecy regarding the future. There is no way to verify its fulfillment.[18] The fulfillment of a prophecy regarding extended lifetimes ought to be verifiable actuarially. If nothing else, the premiums for annual renewable term life insurance policies should fall dramatically. What the amillennialist categorically denies with respect to Christ's resurrection and ascension into heaven—their exclusively symbolic rather than literal character—he affirms for this prophecy of Isaiah.

What this passage in First Corinthians teaches is continuity. Christ was resurrected first. This points to the bodily resurrection of His people in the future. Paul calls Christ's resurrection the firstfruits (vv. 20, 23). This refers back to the Mosaic law's firstfruits festival, when there were offerings to God from the field of the harvest. "Speak

16. Here, I am assuming that post-tribulational dispensationalism does not predict the Rapture at the time of Christ's return to earth. Such a Rapture would separate the wheat from the tares. I am also assuming that post-tribulation dispensationalism does not predict the return of perfect, sin-free, death-free people to rule alongside Christ in history. This would constitute a denial of Paul's message that incorruption and corruption cannot share the same inheritance. Corruption does not inherit incorruption. Incorruption cannot inherit corruption. The two realms remain separate until corruption is removed by final judgment. For more on this, see the Appendix.

17. Appendix A.

18. An example of such a denial is found in Anthony Hoekema's book, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 202. For my response to his argument, see *Millennialism and Social Theory*, pp. 98–106.

unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it" (Lev. 23:10–11). This was a token offering, a kind of down payment on the greater offering to God after the harvest was complete. Christ's resurrection was God's down payment to His people, a promise of the great eschatological event to come.

D. Capital Accumulation

The issue of historical continuity is fundamental for any discussion of capital accumulation. Continuity is the central issue of compound economic growth. Investors who believe in long-term economic growth believe in the possibility of expanding their capital through time. This means that they believe that capital, as a tool of production, can produce ever-greater output over time.

1. Social Discontinuity

If there must inevitably be a great discontinuity in between the church's work today and its work during some future earthly kingdom, then whatever Christians do today to accumulate capital will be thwarted by this great pre-millennial discontinuity. If the Antichrist's kingdom must be triumphant in between the Rapture and the millennial kingdom, as pre-tribulational and mid-tribulational dispensationalists teach, then the capital that is amassed by today's Christians will be inherited by their enemies during a future tribulation era. The wealth of the just is therefore being laid up today for sinners. But Proverbs teaches the opposite. "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just" (Prov. 13:22).[19]

Even if a few elements of this capital legacy somehow survive the Great Tribulation, of what significance will this legacy be in a world ruled by Christ in person, possibly assisted by angels and perhaps even resurrected Christians, who will be sin-free, illness-free, and death-free? Corruption fades in comparison with incorruption. The inherently corrupt capital legacy of history can have no significant role to play in a world governed by the incorrupt. This is why Paul

19. Gary North, *Wisdom and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Proverbs*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2007] 2012), ch. 41.

wrote that corruption cannot inherit incorruption (vv. 50–54). Why, then, should anyone believe that incorruption has any use for corruption? It is doubtful that most premillennialists have even thought about this question. I have never seen it raised by a premillennialist author. Yet this question is crucial for any understanding of the motivation for Christians to sacrifice in the present for the sake of a permanent and meaningful legacy to the future. When a man believes that his spiritual heirs will regard his legacy to them as peripheral to their lives, what is his motivation to save and sacrifice in order to build and extend long-term institutions? Premillennialists do not think carefully about this issue, but the general implications of their eschatology do trickle down to the masses of believers. The result is the familiar rescue-mission mentality. The trumpet of premillennialism is not the trumpet of cultural victory; it is the trumpet of a Salvation Army band.

Similarly, with respect to the cultural effects of Christianity, the amillennialist insists that the continuity of Christianity is a continuity of cultural defeat. Any capital amassed by Christians will either be dissipated or confiscated during a future period of escalating rule by covenant-breakers. Christ's reign in history is seen by amillennialists as almost exclusively internal and psychological, operating mainly in the hearts of His increasingly persecuted people. Amillennialists have no vision of compound economic growth and social redemption along the lines of Deuteronomy 28:1–14. They deny the eschatological possibility of comprehensive redemption.[20]

With respect to the church's age, prior to Christ's physical return to set up an earthly millennial kingdom, premillennialists agree with amillennialists. Things will not go well for Christians or any institutional legacy of Christians that may be produced during the present church age, which dispensationalists call the Great Parenthesis because it supposedly was never predicted in the Old Testament.

It is appropriate at this point to comment on the dispensational doctrine of the church age as the Great Parenthesis. The preaching of Peter at Pentecost refutes the position of conventional dispensationalists on this point, for Peter cited a prophecy in Joel 2 as being fulfilled by the events at Pentecost. "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith

20. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), Appendix C: "Comprehensive Redemption."

God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:16–21). The only consistent way out of this theological dilemma for dispensationalists is to argue, as J. C. O'Hair, Cornelius Stam, and Charles F. Baker did, that Peter did not establish the church; Paul did. Peter's early converts were not members of the church, the body of Christ—the institution that we belong to. They were members of a brief, transitional organization.[21] Very few dispensationalists have been willing to move into ultradispensationalism,[22] but in refusing, they remain committed to an obvious falsehood, for the Old Testament clearly did predict the church, according to Peter. The church age is not a Great Parenthesis. The church is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, and is therefore the heir of Old Covenant promises. Old Covenant Israel was publicly disinherited by Christ. As Jesus told the Jewish leaders, "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). The international church is that nation. The question now is: How many fruits will it bring forth, and what kind? The final answer in history will depend heavily on the eschatologies that are held by its members.

The premillennial-amillennial view of the church's progressive cultural failure shortens their adherents' time frames. They become less future-oriented. They adopt what Ludwig von Mises called *high time preference*. They see few long-run benefits from the steady accumulation of capital in the broadest cultural sense. They believe that Christian cultural capital will either be dissipated over time or else confiscated by sinners during the Great Tribulation or its amillennial equivalent, when the powers of darkness overwhelm the ever-dimming forces of light. Their slogan: "Nice guys finish last."

21. Stam's book, *Things That Differ* (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1959), presents the case for one version of ultradispensationalism, which marks the origin of the church in Acts 9: Paul's ministry. Others argue that the church came after Acts 28.

22. The movement is represented by the Berean Bible Society.

2. Time Perspective and Compound Growth

Mises argued that the more future-oriented a lender is, the lower the rate of interest that a borrower needs to offer him in order to secure a loan. Conversely, the higher the lender's time-preference, i.e., the more present-oriented he is, the higher the rate of interest that he will demand from borrowers. High rates of interest in a society will lower the society's future rate of economic growth. Capital becomes more expensive, so less of it is demanded.[23]

Future-oriented societies enjoy higher rates of economic growth than present-oriented societies. Members of a future-oriented society rank the value of future income higher than do members of a less future-oriented society. They consume less in the present, invest their savings for the sake of future income, and thereby finance economic growth. They get what they prefer: greater wealth and income in the future, which they value more highly than present-oriented people do. In contrast, a present-oriented society consumes more of its capital, leaving less to fund future economic expansion, than a future-oriented society does. Its members also get what they prefer: less growth in the future, more consumption now. Each society purchases corporately what its members prefer. The purchase price is thrift.

Some view of eschatology forms the time perspective of every society. A Christian eschatology that is pessimistic regarding the cultural success of Christianity in the future will lead its adherents to invest differently from Christians who hold a more optimistic view of Christianity's compound growth in the broadest sense. The standard rhetorical question from a Christian who has just had his eschatology challenged exegetically—"Does it really matter very much what eschatology a person holds?"—deserves a forthright answer: "Yes, it matters greatly." It also matters greatly what eschatology a society holds.

The work of the institutional church is funded by the tithes and the above-tithe offerings of the faithful, and by the below-tithe donations of the less faithful. The greater the income of church members, the greater the percentage of their income that they should give away. Each additional dollar of net income per unit of time is used to satisfy a desire that is lower on the person's scale of values. People satisfy their basic needs with the income that they receive first. Thus, as their net income rises, their savings rate and their charitable contributions should increase as a percentage. Sadly, this is rarely the case.

23. Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1949), ch. 19.

Economic growth funds the expansion of God's kingdom into every area of life in which sin presently reigns. Anyway, it should. But when Christians have little faith in the long-term positive results of their work and their donations, God's kingdom in history is hampered by a lack of funding. Christians' lack of faith in the future of Christianity has led to an under-funding of local churches, as well as other Christian ministries. Men do not normally choose to invest in projects that they expect to go bankrupt.

E. Postmillennialism

Paul in this passage applies the footstool eschatology of Psalm 110 to the question of New Testament eschatology. Paul affirms here that the enemies of God will be placed under Jesus' feet in history. Only after this process of subduing is complete will God's final judgment come.

The central theme in Paul's eschatological argument here is the resurrection. Jesus Christ was resurrected bodily, Paul insisted. This event is central to the Christian faith. Without it, he said, Christians' faith is in vain. But the doctrine of the bodily resurrection applies to Christians as well as to Jesus Christ. We will all be resurrected at the last day, Paul says. When will this be? Only after Christ's reign in history has put all of God's enemies under Christ's feet. The last enemy to be defeated will be death. This will mark the end of history.[24]

Paul does not here explicitly refer back to Isaiah 65:17–20, but it ought to be clear that his prophecy regarding the final defeat of death represents the consummation of Isaiah's prophecy regarding the New Heavens and the New Earth in history, an era that will be marked by exceedingly long life spans. There will be increasing continuity over time, including biological continuity. People will live longer.

According to the parable of the wheat and tares, there will be no historical discontinuity prior to the final judgment, which will permanently separate Christians from non-Christians. This parable refutes pre-tribulational and mid-tribulational dispensationalism. There will be no Rapture, secret or otherwise, that removes all Christians from history simultaneously, leaving non-Christians behind to run the world for any period of time. The Bible's doctrine of historical continuity therefore also refutes the inescapable social implication of pre-tribulational dispensationalism, namely, that there will be a break in continuity between Christians' social investments in the broadest

24. See the Appendix.

sense before Christ returns and the final victory of Christianity in history before the final judgment.

Postmillennialism teaches that there will be continuity between what Christians do today and the progressive victory of Christianity in history. In short, there will be compound growth for the kingdom of God in history.

Postmillennialism's confidence about the earthly future of God's kingdom makes postmillennial Christians more future-oriented than those Christians who are committed to pessimilennialism. They have confidence that their kingdom-building efforts in history, funded by their donations and their thrift, will produce inter-generational expansion for God's kingdom in history. There will never be a future discontinuity that will permanently reverse the progressive subduing of God's enemies in history. "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Christ will have dominion, not through a great historical discontinuity in the midst of history (premillennialism) or by an eschatological discontinuity at the end of history (amillennialism), but through historical continuity. This means that He will have dominion representatively in history, through His church in the broadest sense. He will continue to reign from heaven at the right hand of God. His definitive victory over death at the resurrection will be progressively manifested in history, according to Isaiah. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed." Then, Paul writes, "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Christ's definitive ascension out of history into heaven, to rule at the right hand of God, will be progressively manifested by the triumph of Christianity over God's enemies. "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

Conclusion

This eschatology of victory, when widely believed, produces lower interest rates and, as a result of greater thrift, more rapid economic growth than exists in societies where this viewpoint is either absent or not widely believed. Jesus saves. He saves representatively through His people. Jesus saves the world progressively over time. Jesus' followers therefore are supposed to save and then invest wisely whatever they have saved. They are required by God to extend His kingdom in history, and this requires capital. Capital must therefore be progres-

sively accumulated by covenant-keepers in history. This capital is primarily spiritual, but not exclusively. This is why a "good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just" (Prov. 13:22). It is this inter-generational accumulation of capital that serves as the basis of the inheritance of the earth in history by God's covenantal agents. "What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth" (Ps. 25:12–13).

18

SYSTEMATIC CHARITY

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

I CORINTHIANS 16:1–3

The theocentric principle here is the requirement that God's covenant people who possess assets show mercy to God's covenant people without assets. God's covenant is extended in history through charitable giving. This is sanctions: point four of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. The Church Universal

Paul indicates here that he was in communication with other congregations in the Mediterranean. These were gentile congregations. The object of his call for charity was the church in Jerusalem, which was made up mainly of Jews. The international church's confession was understood by Paul as the basis of a unity that transcended the differences between Jews and Greeks. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Rom. 10:12). This being the case, the suffering of one congregation had become a matter of concern for all of the others. The church of Jesus Christ is international. This fact should bring the sufferings of one congregation to the attention of the others.

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 4.

The universality of the church is part of the international division of labor in the broadest sense. The unity of the church is based on the doctrine of the church as Christ's body. "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1:17–20). The members of this international, inter-cultural body are interconnected, as Paul had explained earlier in this epistle (ch. 12). They are bound to each other by an oath to the same covenantal God.

Paul here mentions other congregations. They were also taking collections for the Jerusalem church. He reminds the Corinthians that they are not alone in this effort. He also subtly reminds them that other congregations are doing their share. No single congregation was being asked to bear an excessive burden. This was a joint relief effort.

Because the church is universal, its members are supposed to be able to rely on the generosity of other members. This membership extends beyond any local congregation. This sense of belonging and mutual obligation served the churches as an early form of economic insurance. Groups have always developed informal and formal systems of mutual aid in order to reduce the risks of disaster to individual members. This has always been one of the benefits of joining a closely knit group. Paul here establishes a principle that the group known as the church is larger than a local congregation.

The farther away from a central location—in this case, Jerusalem—the weaker are the perceived claims of mutual obligation. Local bonds are stronger. They are more personal. Participants know each other and possess information about each other. Donors know if recipients are wasteful or not. They know if the person who has fallen on hard times is in trouble because of external circumstances or because of his own folly. The farther away the recipient of charity is, the more that the donors must rely on the judgment of third parties regarding the legitimacy of a distant poor person's claims.

B. The Fund-Raiser

Paul was the most important third party in the gentile church. The congregations' leaders trusted him and his judgment. He had spoken on behalf of the Jerusalem congregation. Because the Jerusalem

church was suffering as a collective unit, gentile donors could safely assume that the plight of that congregation was not the result of foolish behavior on the part of a few people. The Jerusalem congregation had overseers who were apostles. If that premier congregation was suffering, this must have been the result of external circumstances, not the moral weakness of its members or its leaders.

The importance of a trusted spokesman in raising charitable funds is very great. His assessment of the situation is vital for the success of the fund-raising effort. First, people must trust both his morals and his judgment. Paul, as the primary founder of the gentile churches, possessed this trust. Second, he must be an effective motivator. Not everyone knows how to persuade other people to donate money. Paul wrote effective fund-raising letters. His two surviving letters to the Corinthians contain fund-raising sections (II Cor. 8–9).[2] Third, he must have access to the donors, either directly or indirectly. In Paul's case, contact was both direct and indirect. He visited congregations. He also wrote letters, which would be read by local leaders. Fourth, there must be some way to collect the money. He said that he would visit the Corinthian church. He might even accompany the men who would take the money to Jerusalem. "And if it be meet [fit] that I go also, they shall go with me" (v. 4).

Paul left the details of collecting the money to the local congregations. He told the Corinthians to select representatives to go to Jerusalem and deliver the money. Transportation costs being what they were—high—this project was a major undertaking. The presumption was that a lot of money would be involved, making it mandatory that someone from the congregation personally deliver the money to the representatives of the Jerusalem church. Paul acted as a spokesman for that church, but the responsibility for the delivery of the funds was the local church's. Paul wisely delegated this responsibility to local church members. This reduced his responsibility, and it also made it clear to donors that they would be represented by people from their own congregation. No accusation could subsequently be made against Paul if something happened to him while he was carrying the money. He would not carry the money. He could not fairly be accused of misappropriating the funds if something happened to him or the money.

We can see that Paul had set up a system of international charity

2. Gary North, *Ethics and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on the Epistles* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 20912), chaps. 4, 5.

that was based on trust—several layers of trust. He was serving as an agent on behalf of the Jerusalem church, but also on behalf of the church international. Local control over funding was retained in his system, but he coordinated the collection of the funds. He also served as a trusted intermediary, thereby legitimizing the claims of the Jerusalem church. By doing all this, he reduced institutional and personal resistance to the Jerusalem church's appeal for funds. In fact, there is no mention by Paul of such an appeal by the Jerusalem church. He was acting on their behalf as the initiating agent.

Paul accepted no personal support from any congregation. He earned his money as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). This was wise. He maintained his independence this way. So, when he asked for money, people knew that this money was not for his personal use. This tended to reduce criticism, but it did not eliminate it. By the time he was about to arrive to collect the money (II Cor. 8), he had come under fire by disgruntled members. He therefore reminded the church of their lack of charity toward him.

> Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile. Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps? Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying (II Cor. 12:14–19).[3]

Paul acted from the beginning of the collection process as though he knew that where donated money is concerned, criticism is close at hand. When people decide that they do not want to honor their promises, they seek ways to assuage their consciences. "Blame the fund-raiser" is a tried-and-true conscience-assuager. Paul called them to task for this: "Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have" (II Cor. 8:11).

It is easy to make a pledge. The hard part is doing what you have pledged. Jesus used this fact to accuse the Pharisees of treason against the kingdom of God.

3. *Ibid.*, ch. 10.

> But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him (Matt. 21:28–32).

Paul warned them months in advance to begin laying aside a portion of their wealth, week by week. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (v. 2). This was a serious fund-raising project. It was international. Paul was not relying on his ability to create a one-time event in which he would come through town, whoop up the crowd, take the money, and leave. He told them, on the contrary, that he would not ask them to donate anything new when he arrived. They were responsible before his arrival to lay aside their donations. Week by week, the accumulated wealth was to accumulate even more.

Paul was relying on the consciences of covenant-keeping men to provide the funding. He was not relying on his ability to whip people's emotions to a high pitch. He was an apostle. He acted like an apostle. He possessed lawful authority. He did not possess great speaking ability, as he had already admitted:

> And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (I Cor. 2:1–5).

So, he had to rely on their consciences and their self-discipline. He advised them to set aside their donations systematically, week by week. That would be sufficient.

C. Proportional Giving

Paul asks them to give as they are able, in terms of however much God had prospered them. This standard is consistent with the prin-

ciple of the tithe. This special collection of funds went beyond the tithe. It was an offering, as in "tithes and offerings," as modern Protestant churches put it. It was not to be tithes *or* offerings. The church is supported by the tithes of its members.[4] Paul's request was in addition to the tithe. This was why he was writing a special appeal to church members. He was not asking the church's leaders to pay for this special collection out of the local congregation's tithe money, which belonged to the local congregation.

1. Charity

The principle here is that God provides men's blessings, so church members should be willing to distribute a portion of their blessings to others who have suffered setbacks. The donor thereby becomes a means of God's provision of a blessing for others. God has established charity as an indirect means of delivering His blessings. He normally does this through nature, human labor, creativity, and thrift, and through the division of labor, which includes markets. He enables people to produce goods and services for each other. The productivity of their labor is maximized through voluntary exchange. But, in some cases, God provides blessings indirectly. When people's productivity fails to provide them with sufficient income, other people's productivity can provide supplemental income. This is part of God's overall system of blessings.

Clearly, the greater a person's productivity, the more he is capable of providing blessings for others out of his surplus income. Similarly, the greater a society's productivity, the greater its members' ability to provide blessings out of their surplus income. Paul calls on the Corinthian church to give proportionally to their prosperity. He does not ask them to give sacrificially. He limits his request. Corinth was a rich city. Its local congregation was better able to provide blessings for others than were, say, the Macedonian congregations. Paul reminded them of this in a subsequent letter.

> Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering

4. Gary North, *Tithing and the Church* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1994).

> to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God (II Cor. 8:1–5).[5]

2. The Very Poor Give More

By comparing the reactions of the members of the Corinthian church with the reactions of the members of the Macedonian churches, Paul soon discovered a fact of life about charitable giving: the very poor are often the more dedicated givers than the comparatively rich. This had been pointed out by Jesus in the incident of the widow's mite, a low-value coin. "And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had" (Luke 21:1–4).[6]

We would expect that charitable giving would increase as a percentage of after-tax income when men's income increases. They can more easily afford to pay for their basic necessities, which do not vary much from person to person, unless high medical expenses are involved. After all, people can eat only so much food. They can wear only one pair of shoes at a time. But it is well known that as people's income increases, their expenditures on customer goods keep pace or even increase as a percentage of their income. Only when they attain enormous wealth do their consumption expenditures begin to lag behind their income.

This indicates that people's tastes change when their income rises. Tastes for consumer goods change. We hear of someone who has "more expensive tastes" than he had before his income rose. This is another way of saying that money and the things that money buys are addictive. The more money you receive, the more you spend. The more you spend, the more things you want. Jesus warned against the addictive power of money, especially in His sermons and sayings that are recorded in the Gospel of Luke.[7]

In contrast, Christians believe that, through God's grace, righteousness can become addictive. A person who gives 10% of his income may find pleasure from giving an even larger percentage the next year. But Christians do not believe that this preference for righteousness is natural. It is a consciously developed taste which normally takes years to

5. North, *Ethics and Dominion*, ch. 4.

6. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 50.

7. Luke 8:11–15; 8:18; 12:15–21; 12:22–34; 16:13.

develop. A growing trust in God, which the discipline of giving produces, does not come naturally. It runs counter to autonomous man's assumption that this world is stacked against him, and that he must beat it into submission. Autonomous man does not believe in God's grace—an unmerited gift from God—nor does he believe that the universe is governed by an omnipotent God who takes care of His people when they give money to extend the kingdom of God in history. He sees the universe either as malevolent or impersonal. In neither case does grace influence its operations, let alone govern them.

The failure of Christians to increase the proportion of their giving when they are economically blessed by God testifies to their limited vision. They have not violated God's law, so long as they have tithed, but they have not shown the courage of their convictions regarding God's care of His people. They need not feel guilty if they have faithfully tithed, but they should feel a sense that something valuable is missing in their lives. God's kingdom must be funded. Assisting other Christians in their time of need is a great privilege. Paul made this clear: "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).[8]

Conclusion

Paul here asks members of the Corinthian church to show liberality toward the Jerusalem church. The Jerusalem church was in dire straits. Paul asks the members of the Corinthian church to display generosity to the Jerusalem church, even as God has provided generously for the members of the Corinthian church. There should be proportionality here: more received from God, more distributed in God's name.

This should be systematic giving, he said: week by week. God gives blessings daily; church members should set aside their surplus wealth and bring it to the church to coincide with weekly worship services. This is systematic giving. It is the model for all giving. It should be habitual. Habits are hard to break. Good habits are to be inculcated through self-discipline.

Paul avoided using his appearance at the church to pressure members to give at one meeting. He appealed instead to their self-discipline. A regular habit provides greater results in the long run than sporadic emotional commitments.

8. Gary North, *Sacrifice and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Acts*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 9.

CONCLUSION

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

I CORINTHIANS 3:10–15

A. Building Christ's Kingdom

Christians are workers who are engaged in a great construction project: building the kingdom of God in time and on earth (Matt. 28:18–20).[1] Paul says in chapter 3 of this epistle that Christians should understand that their work will be judged by God at the end of time. This future, final judgment should serve as the primary motivation for Christians to make evaluations—render judgment—in a God-honoring way, and then to act in terms of them. This epistle deals with the correct rendering of judgment.

This kingdom-construction project is a corporate effort, Paul says. He is not writing in this epistle primarily about personal salvation. We know this because he says that he has laid the foundation, and others have built on it. This refers to a foundation for something corporate. "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a

1. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 48. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *The Greatness of the Great Commission: The Christian Enterprise in a Fallen World* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (vv. 10–11). The foundation defines the building. What was this original foundation? Christ. This is the foundation of salvation in the broadest sense: comprehensive redemption.[2] Paul laid this foundation in Corinth. It is now each individual church member's responsibility to build on it, he says. This is a corporate effort, as he explains in chapter 12.

This joint effort in building Christ's kingdom was being thwarted by divisions in the church at Corinth. Paul in this epistle deals with divisions within the congregation, which were based on rival allegiances to the perceived co-founders of the local church. "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (I Cor. 1:12–13). Members were treating the foundation as if the builders, rather than Christ, were the foundation. This led them to adopt a theory of multiple foundations. These divisions in the Corinthian church were hampering the work of the local church. Paul argues that its members should find their unity in the church, which is the body of Christ (I Cor. 12).[3] Paul here brings the Corinthian church under judgment.

B. Final Judgment, Present Judgments

Paul teaches in I Corinthians 3 that God's final judgment of every Christian will involve God's presentation of rewards for their earthly service. There is also the threat of a negative sanction: a public revelation of the worthlessness of a Christian's vain efforts in history. "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." This means that everything that a Christian has accumulated in history will go through a cleansing fire at the last day. Some of it will survive; some of it will be consumed. In some cases, all of it will be consumed. This will be the bonfire of the vanities.

The message here is that there is continuity between history and eternity: spiritual gold, silver, and precious stones. This will survive into eternity. There is also discontinuity: spiritual wood, hay, and stubble. This will not survive into eternity. God's final judgment will

2. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), Appendix C.

3. Chapter 15.

publicly test the quality of each Christian's legacy in history insofar as it extends into eternity. A Christian possesses legitimate hope that some of what he does in history will extend into eternity. That is to say, the solid building that he constructs on Christ's foundation will serve as a capital asset in eternity. Jesus made the same point. He recommended that people make this exchange in history: temporal wealth for eternal wealth (Luke 8:11–15).[4] Covenant-keepers can lay up treasure in heaven through their charitable activities and sacrificial service in history. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:19–20).[5]

What God will do at the final resurrection of mankind (I Cor. 15; Rev. 20:14–15), all men must do in history: *render judgment*. God's final judgment will involve declaring retroactive evaluations. Men make evaluations, too, but our major judgments should be future-oriented into the realm beyond history. There is no escape from making decisions in history, other than a severe, incapacitating mental disease, when the disease's victim becomes a ward of others. We exchange one set of conditions for another, decision by decision, as we move through time. We evaluate our present condition and imagine various possible future conditions. Then we decide which condition we should seek to achieve through our present actions. Individual decision-making involves making an overall self-assessment of our abilities and disabilities, our present assets, our plans for the future, and the nature of the challenge facing us. Then we allocate our scarce economic resources, including time, to fulfill our plans.

Paul recommends that we consider the likely outcome on judgment day of our present actions. This involves imagining the rewards that will come to us as a result of God's retroactive evaluation of our actions. We are to think God's thoughts after Him, in advance. This is possible only because covenant-keepers possess the mind of Christ. "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:15–16).[6]

4. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 15.

5. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 13.

6. Chapter 2.

The covenant-keeper is told to imagine God's final judgment: the content of God's judgment rendered retroactively on his lifetime of individual labors. Theologians call God's judicial assessment and declaration *imputation*. The decision-maker also imputes. He imputes future value to his possible rewards, and he also imputes future value to the possible destruction of part or all of his legacy. He renders judgment in the present regarding the probable declaration of God on judgment day. Having made this evaluation, the covenant-keeper is supposed to act in the present in terms of this imagined future judgment. He should impute to the present the net value to him today of God's future retroactive imputation of value to his work. A person's assessment or imputation of value to the future must be acted upon in the present, day by day. Making a correct judgment in the present involves making a correct judgment regarding the future value of the results of present decisions. This future value will be imputed by God retroactively.

C. Imputation and Economics

To impute is to assess. The Greek work translated as "impute" comes from another Greek word meaning "to take an inventory." The longest section in Scripture dealing with imputation is found in Romans 4.

> For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was **counted** unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not **reckoned** of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is **counted** for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God **imputeth** righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not **impute** sin. Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was **reckoned** to Abraham for righteousness (Rom. 4:3–9).

God will impute judicially on judgment day. He will take a retroactive inventory of each person's thoughts and actions in history. He will assess his permanent judicial status in terms of His law. Then He will declare His findings: "guilty" or "not guilty." Were it not for Christ's perfect substitutionary atonement, the declaration would universally be "guilty." This is the doctrine of imputation: *a judicial declaration by God*. But this judicial declaration is also economic, for it assesses comparative value: wood, hay, and stubble vs. gold, silver, and precious stones.

Because each person is made in the image of God, he imputes value to things in the world around him. He assesses subjectively the value to him of whatever is the object of his decision. This includes comparing present subjective value to expected future subjective value. It also includes comparing its present market price to the market price of other resources. He then compares today's array of prices with tomorrow's expected array of prices. If he is wise, he then compares today's value with his expectation regarding God's retroactive assessment of today's value. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). This imputation process is subjective, but it is ultimately related to objective value: God's imputation. God's imputation of value is objective, for He is the absolutely sovereign Subject. *God's absolute sovereignty establishes objective value in history*. This is why economics, in order to be objectively true, must be grounded in the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. If value theory is grounded solely on each individual's subjective valuations, then the objectivity of economic science dissipates into non-rational intuition.[7]

Price is not the same as value. A price is objective; value is subjective. A decision-maker estimates subjectively what the value to him of some resource is; then he checks its objective price. He then compares this price—what he must exchange in order to obtain legal control over the resource—with the price of other scarce resources. Then he asks himself: "What should I buy, if anything, in order to maximize my immediate subjective value?" His subjective decision is influenced by the objective array of prices. He seeks to minimize the objective price he must pay in order to obtain the subjective value he seeks.

People impute value to scarce economic resources. Then they make objective bids in order to obtain those resources that they expect will maximize their subjective value. The interplay of these objective bids is what we call the price system. These competitive, objective bids for ownership or temporary legal control over scarce resources produce an objective array of prices. *These bids do not create value*. On the contrary, the bids are the results of subjectively imputed value, decision-maker by decision-maker. Their competing bids establish objective prices.

To impute value correctly, the decision-maker must begin with an imaginative forecast regarding God's present and final retroac-

7. Gary North, "Economics: From Reason to Intuition," in Gary North (ed.), *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective* (Vallecito, California: Ross House Books, 1976).

tive imputation of value to the outcome of some decision facing the decision-maker. Imputed value has two aspects: value to the decision-maker and value to God with respect to building His kingdom. Needless to say, it is the second imputation that is authoritative, but both have eternal consequences.

D. Rival Scales of Value

Paul begins the epistle with a consideration of foolishness. Covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers have irreconcilable definitions of foolishness. What is considered wise by the covenant-breaker is considered foolish by the covenant-keeper, and vice-versa (1:18–25).[8]

Imputation requires standards. This is true of both judicial imputation and economic imputation. "Guilty" vs. "not guilty" is judicial; "valuable" vs. "worthless" is economic. There are rival standards of right and wrong. There are rival standards of valuable and worthless. The competition in history between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan is based, not on power, but on the objective results of the imputations and actions of each kingdom's covenantal agents in history.

Imputation begins with an individual's scale of values. These value scales are not morally neutral. There is no agreement among acting men regarding the authority of these rival scales of value. On the contrary, there is great disagreement. But, as we shall see, the disagreement is not total. There is some agreement, as a result of God's common grace to covenant-breakers.[9] If there were no agreement, there could not be economic cooperation. There could be no division of labor.

There are rival scales of value that separate covenant-keepers from covenant-breakers, but certain features of the biblical system of covenantal sanctions do invite obedience to covenantal laws. Common grace involves common law and common sanctions. The creation is under God's law and God's sanctions. This includes economic law. Moses wrote: "But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day. Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely

8. Chapter 1.

9. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deut. 4:4–8).[10] For example, honesty is the best policy. Covenant-breakers generally perceive a predictable relationship between honesty (law) and success (sanctions) in history. This perception—this accurate judgment—on the part of sinners is why social order is possible in history.

The covenant-breaker seeks personal advantages that his presuppositions neither entitle him to nor enable him to attain. His presuppositions, when acted upon, lead to poverty and death. "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death" (Prov. 8:36). So, in order to gain his advantages, he must appropriate certain aspects of the biblical worldview, although stripped of their foundation: faith in God, Christ, and the power of the cross. God restrains the covenant-breaker in his pursuit of his God-denying, God-defying presuppositions. This is an aspect of common grace.

The covenant-breaker has a rival set of presuppositions and a rival set of ethics. His ethical values, if they conform to what the Bible teaches, are consistent with the attainment of success in history. He who serves customers effectively can become wealthy, despite his denial of God. Covenant-breakers see this economic success, and they are tempted to adopt the covenant-keeper's practices, so that they can also participate in the benefits—the positive sanctions—that obedience to God's law produces in history. The covenant-breaker is often willing to cooperate with covenant-keepers on the latter's ethical terms, for the sake of increasing his own wealth. If adherence to God's law did not lead to success in history, the covenant-breaker would have no incentive to obey God's law. But obedience to God's law does produce success, and covenant-breakers see this. God's sanctions in history—point four of the biblical covenant[11]—promote social cooperation.

Most Christian theologians and social theorists deny the existence of any New Testament correlation between covenant-keeping and visible success, and also between covenant-breaking and visible failure.

10. Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1999] 2012), ch. 8.

11. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4.

They therefore have an obligation to explain the existence of social cooperation that is based on men's subjective agreement regarding the objective results of obeying or disobeying God's law. They generally invoke some version of natural law theory, which in the world of Darwinism, is no longer a persuasive argument. There are no fixed laws in Darwinism.

E. Making Godly Judgments

Free men are better capable of making accurate, responsible judgments regarding their lives than men in bondage are. This includes assessments regarding their service to God. Men are to assess their skills and their opportunities for serving God, and then match the two. They are supposed to seek out their most productive area of service to God. Then they are to accept this area of service as God's special call to them. This is what Paul calls the calling (I Cor. 7:20).[12]

Over time, covenant-keepers are supposed to increase their ability to perform their godly service. This means that they should experience increasing productivity over time. This principle of increasing productivity applies to the calling, and it also applies to a person's occupation. Increased performance is an aspect of a man's increased power of judgment. As covenant-keepers mature through on-the-calling training, they should become better able to understand and apply cause and effect (predictable sanctions) in history. They should be able assess more accurately the role of specific facts or opportunities before them in terms of general biblical principles. This is the art of casuistry. It is a nearly lost art today.

At some point in a man's life, old age intervenes. Men's performance may begin to falter. This was the problem faced by Barzillai. David asked him to come to Jerusalem with him. Barzillai declined on the basis of his age.

> Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man. And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem. And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king? Thy servant will go a little way

12. Chapter 8.

> over Jordan with the king: and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother. But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee (II Sam. 19:32–37).

This indicates that there should be no abdication of the responsibility to make judgments until the infirmities of old age intervene. Covenant-keepers should continue to serve God for as long as they are capable. If they have selected their callings wisely, they can continue in them even after they are no longer capable of earning a living. Their lifetime service to God can continue. It is a great blessing to be able to continue to serve in old age. Caleb understood this, and he should be our model.

> And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said. And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel (Josh. 14:10–14).

Sanctions and judgment are both aspects of point four of the biblical covenant. Caleb had rendered accurate judgment, along with Joshua, with respect to the weakness of the Canaanites (Num. 14). For this public testimony, God blessed both men publicly. They alone of their generation would go into the Promised Land, God said. God then blessed Caleb with vigorous long life. Caleb, in turn, accepted great responsibility, despite his age, when the conquest of Canaan began. Blessings and responsibility go together (Luke 12:47–48).[13] So do blessings and good judgment.

F. Private Property

A customer owns property. With his property, he can make offers to purchase other forms of property. He makes offers because he has im-

13. North, *Treasure and Dominion*, ch. 28.

puted economic value to his own property and then to the property of others. He has concluded that the item that the other person owns is more valuable subjectively to him than whatever he himself owns. Exchanges take place because of men's subjective imputations—"mine in exchange for yours"—and also their legal right to make bids.

A worker has legal title to his labor. He can exchange it or use it directly to satisfy his wants. The laborer is worthy of his hire (I Tim. 5:17–18). Because an ox has the right to eat from the field that it plows, so is the producer entitled to his output (I Cor. 9:7–10).[14] Customers impute value to the fruits (output) of a worker's labor. They make objective competing bids to purchase this output. Producers expect this imputed value by customers to continue, so they expect to sell its output to customers later. These competitive bids by producers-employers establish labor's free market price, which is the price of labor's expected output. Buyers of labor will not pay more than the expected price of the worker's expected output, discounted by the interest rate. They are happy to pay less, but competition from other buyers of labor keeps the price high.

Legally, a worker owns his labor. He can legally refuse any offer to buy it from him. When he does, he thereby forfeits whatever he was offered in exchange, but he has the right to refuse to sell. If a person owns something, he possesses the right to disown it or keep it, as he sees fit.

It is the legal right to make offers or bids that establishes economic freedom. It also establishes the final earthly authority of the customer. His legal right to make an offer to buy imposes economic costs on anyone who refuses to accept it. This is the customer's "hammer." This is the basis of his authority: legal and economic.

Paul's command to covenant-keepers to seek other people's benefits is a call to voluntary charity (I Cor. 10:24).[15] The context of this command is Paul's prohibition against participation in ritual feasts on behalf of idols. The devils represented by idols are thieves and seducers. People who sacrifice to idols seek their own goals at the expense of those from whom devils will steal or will deceive. The opposite approach is God's way: self-sacrifice for others. This is why Jesus Christ voluntarily died on the cross. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

14. Chapter 11.
15. Chapter 12.

This principle of self-sacrifice, when coupled with the prohibition against ritual feasting, leads to a conclusion: godly people must not use stolen or confiscated wealth to sacrifice on behalf of others. Christians must not mimic devils. They must not use coercion by the state to gain access to wealth that is then transferred to others, even if the beneficiaries are poor and needy. To use the state to conduct coercive wealth transfers on behalf of any economically needy group is to adopt the way of Satan. It is to violate property rights in a fundamental way. It violates the eighth commandment: thou shalt not steal.[16]

This violation of property rights has taken place on a massive scale, accelerating in the West during the second decade of the twentieth century and escalating rapidly during and after World War I (1914–18). The West has established enormous inter-generational wealth transfers by means of compulsory retirement programs and compulsory medical insurance programs that benefit the aged. This has led to escalating taxation and the entrance of wives into the work force. Working wives bear fewer children, which reduces the growth of the work force, which reduces the future tax base, which leads to the actuarial bankruptcy of the state's compulsory retirement programs. This is a classic vicious circle. It threatens the solvency[17] and therefore the legitimacy of Western civil governments.

The extension of the economic division of labor through capitalist ownership has made employment opportunities available to women as never before in history. Capitalism has produced technology that has steadily equalized the productivity of men and women. This has created disruptions in the social order, especially in the family's hierarchy, but also in politics. Because of the increasing division of labor under capitalism, women have been able to enter the work force, a development which employers and tax collectors have applauded. Output has increased, but the ever-increasing employment opportunities of women have increased the cost—forfeited income—for wives who decide to stay out of the work force. Salaried wives have gained greater influence in the family, in the consumer goods markets, and in politics. This development has challenged the covenantal male-female hierarchy in the family.[18]

---

16. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 2, *Decalogue and Dominion* (1986), ch. 28.

17. Peter Peterson, *Gray Dawn: How the Coming Age Wave Will Transform America—And the World* (New York: Times Books, 1999).

18. Chapter 14.

G. Full-Time Christian Service

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31). This admonition establishes an important principle of Christian economics: any form of lawful service to God can legitimately become part of a Christian's call into full-time Christian service. This is an aspect of a life of sacrifice. Paul wrote to the church in Rome, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).[19] This sacrificial service involves eating and drinking. These seemingly common activities become uncommon through God's grace. They do not become sacramental, but they become holy: set apart by God.

The familiar distinction in modern pietism between full-time Christian service and that form of Christian service which pietists refuse to name is a false distinction. Pietists see full-time Christian service as almost exclusively ecclesiastical, i.e., tithe-supported. The kingdom of God in history they see as limited to churches and Christian families. But full-time Christian service is much broader than ecclesiastical employment or running a Christian household. It involves every aspect of life. Wherever sin reigns, there we find a task for Christians: to overcome sin and its effects through the preaching of the gospel and progressive sanctification, both individual and corporate. Christ's redemption is comprehensive. No area of life in which sin operates is off-limits to Christ's redemption. Wherever Christians labor to overcome sin and its effects, there we see an aspect of full-time Christian service. To declare any area of life as being irrelevant to full-time Christian service is necessarily also to declare this area of life as either sin-free or beyond the command of Christ to redeem it. Both statements would be so obviously heretical that pietists do not announce either of them, but one or the other conclusion is implied by their view of Christ's supposedly limited atonement, i.e., atonement only for souls, not for social policies, practices, and institutions. Such a view of redemption officially hands most of the world over to the devil.

H. The Division of Labor

In chapter 12, Paul develops at greater length a theme found in chapter 12 of his letter to Rome. He pictures the church as a body. Members of the church are members of a body. The word "members" applies

19. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 7.

to both. Church members are part of a whole. Some of them perform prestigious tasks; others perform lowly tasks. All of this is necessary to the proper functioning of the church. No church-enhancing service should be despised, either by the person performing it or by others, who are the beneficiaries of the service. Paul does not argue that there are no differences among tasks. He does not argue that services should be equally rewarded economically. On the contrary, he elsewhere says that ministers of the gospel are entitled to double honor. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (I Tim. 5:17).[20] What he is saying in this passage is that, with respect to the legitimacy of work, all God-honoring work is equally legitimate.

Paul's discussion of services and servants in the church is analogous to the theological distinction between the ontological Trinity and the economical Trinity. The doctrine of the ontological Trinity expresses the equality of being among the three persons of the Godhead. The doctrine of the economical Trinity expresses the differences in function among the three persons of the Trinity. There is no hierarchy of divine being; there is a hierarchy of divine function. So it is within the church. There is an equality of legitimacy for all labor, yet also a hierarchy—inequality—of function.

The implications of Paul's presentation extend far beyond any local congregation. They extend to the church international. They apply to all institutions that serve a legitimate end. Paul affirms the dignity of all God-honoring labor. I know of no biblical passage that more forcefully affirms this principle.

The division of labor is extended most effectively when workers have respect both for the legitimacy of their work and its positive effects on others. People are more willing to sacrifice in the present in order to increase their performance and output in the future when they view their work as legitimate. This passage should be seen as complementing Paul's earlier command that people not change their callings in life, except for slaves who are offered their freedom (I Cor. 7:20–24).[21] That command applies to men's highest service to God: the calling. This passage applies also to service to God, but it can and should be extended to people's occupations.

---

20. Paul does not say this of "teaching elders," but of "ruling elders." This traditional Presbyterian distinction within the office of elder faces a serious difficulty with this verse. Paul identifies rulership as the basis of double honor.

21. Chapter 8.

I. Eschatology and Capital Accumulation

Paul's discussion in chapter 15 regarding the last things (eschatology) applies the footstool theology of Psalm 110 to the future of Christ's earthly kingdom. Christ will subdue all of His enemies, including death. This process of subduing His enemies has to refer to history. The final removal of death has to refer to the end of history, because people will still die during the era that fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa. 65:17–20).[22] Christians can therefore have legitimate confidence that their efforts to extend Christ's kingdom can bear permanent fruit, in time and on earth. Whatever they do today that is of value on behalf of God's kingdom will extend into the future: gold, silver, and precious stones. This time perspective we call future-oriented. Ludwig von Mises called it high time-preference.

Using a subjectively determined rate of interest, men discount the value of their expected future income. For example, an ounce of gold is worth more in the present than the secure promise of an ounce of gold in the future. This is because we are responsible to God in the present. The value of our lives and our capital is greater for us today than in the future because we can apply our lives and our capital to our callings and occupations today. *We are responsible to God for the use of our resources today*. This immediate burden weighs heavily upon us. Jesus warned: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34).[23] Those people who subjectively value future income more highly than other people value it will act accordingly. They save a higher percentage of their income than less future-oriented people do. Men seek their subjective goals, and those who value future income more highly will sacrifice in the present more willingly than those who do not place equally high value on future income.

Christians who understand and accept the implications for history of Paul's teaching in chapter 15—and very few ever have—see the future cultural success of Christ's earthly kingdom as prophetically secure. They view their present sacrifices on behalf of God's kingdom as contributing directly to the eventual triumph of Christ's visible kingdom in history. They believe in a positive correlation between covenant-keeping and visible success. They place higher pres-

22. Gary North, *Restoration and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on the Prophets* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 15.

23. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 15.

ent value on these sacrifices than do those Christians who believe that either (1) Christ's earthly kingdom will steadily lose influence culturally, and will in fact be ever-more under siege by victorious covenant-breakers (amillennialism); or (2) Christ's earthly kingdom will steadily lose influence culturally, and will in fact be ever-more under siege by victorious covenant-breakers until Christ comes again in person to establish His millennial kingdom, thereby introducing a wholly new system of government, i.e., a new "economy" (premillennialism). The first view of the future predicts a falling rate of cultural return in history for any investment that Christians make in the kingdom. The second view does the same. Premillennialism teaches that only a future, discontinuous, supernatural reversal of today's culturally futile kingdom-investment program—a future intervention which has nothing to do with today's investment programs or today's rate of saving—will reverse the kingdom's falling rate of return. Both views confine their discussions of today's manifestations of kingdom victory to inward spiritual experiences and the superior family values of an ever-declining percentage of the world's population over time.

Only postmillennialism affirms a continuity of victory in history for Christ's kingdom. Only postmillennialism fosters a theologically grounded optimism regarding the long-term growth of Christian capital that will compound over time, leading to the triumphant extension of Christ's kingdom institutions. Institutions must be funded, and this takes economic productivity. Postmillennialism affirms the inevitability of greater compound growth over time for covenant-keepers than for covenant-breakers. Compound growth over many generations, even at a very low a rate of growth, will outperform compound growth over three or four generations, even at a very high rate of growth. This is the implication of the second commandment. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:4–6).[24]

Greater future-orientation produces higher rates of thrift. Higher rates of thrift produce greater capital investment: tools. Greater cap-

24. North, *Authority and Dominion*, ch.22.

ital investment produces an extension of the division of labor: the specialization of production. Greater specialization of production produces a higher rate of output for resource inputs, especially labor, because workers are better able to match their specific skills with ever-more specialized employment opportunities. Greater output produces a higher rate of compound growth. This is another example of why eschatology matters. It matters a great deal.

J. Giving Wealth Away Systematically

Unlike humanistic theorists of economic growth, Paul taught that Christians must give away some of their wealth. Jesus taught this even more emphatically, as the Gospel of Luke emphasizes. Instead of re-investing all of their income above a minimal standard of living, Christians are supposed to allocate a rising percentage of their increasing income to charitable activities. This outlook was best articulated by John Wesley in his 50th sermon, *The Use of Money* (1745), based on Luke 16:9: "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Wesley concluded, in a famous aphorism, "Gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can." The Methodists taught this doctrine to the lower classes of England, not to the rich, who were not the targets of the movement's evangelistic program. Within three generations, Methodists both in England and the United States went from abject poverty to middle-class comfort.

Paul in chapter 16 calls on the Corinthians to adopt a program of making weekly contributions to the fund for the relief of the church at Jerusalem. He identifies systematic giving as the proper way to raise funds for large projects. Week by week, the Corinthians were to bring their offerings for the Jerusalem church and hand over the money to church officers. This was their reasonable service.

Conclusion

Paul's first epistle to the church at Corinth is judgmental. He brings judgment against the congregation. He also calls on the congregation to begin to exercise greater self-judgment in order to heal the congregation's divisions. This self-judgment had to involve the following:

1. their recognition of the unity of the church in Christ;
2. their awareness of rival standards of evaluation between covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers;

3. their perception of personal rewards and punishment at the final judgment;
4. their devotion to living as stewards for God;
5. their excommunication of a public sinner;
6. their establishment of church courts;
7. their lifetime commitment to their individual callings before God (unless they are slaves who are granted their freedom);
8. their acceptance of the responsibilities of Christian liberty;
9. their adoption of hope regarding the fruits of their labor;
10. their understanding of the whole of their lives as the worship of God;
11. their willingness to serve their fellow-believers;
12. their willing subordination to the covenantal hierarchies of church and family;
13. their purging of bad practices during the Lord's Supper;
14. their development of the church's division of labor; and
15. their voluntary increase of sacrificial giving on behalf of the Jerus alem congregation.

He called on the church of Corinth to reform itself comprehensively through self-judgment.

The primary issue confronting the church at Corinth was the issue of responsibility, both individual and corporate. The Corinthians were indulging in a massive corporate flight from responsibility. They had adopted some sort of common-ground speculation with covenant-breakers, ignoring the fact that the wisdom of one group is the foolishness of the other. Paul called them to abandon common-ground thinking in every area of life. This meant that they had to set up a church court, so that members would not go before pagan civil courts against one another. The institutional mark of their irresponsibility was their subservience to heathen civil courts in preference to a church court.

This is not a call for Christians to withdraw from social life. It is rather a call for them to work to reform social life, to reform and then incorporate all of social life within Christ's kingdom, in time and on earth. It is a call for Christians to establish alternative social institutions, such as church courts, in preparation for the guaranteed historical victory of Christ over His enemies in time and on earth. This victory will be achieved, not by Christ in person, but through His covenantal representatives. It will be achieved by means of the preaching of the gospel and the progressive sanctification, both individual and corporate, that is produced by this gospel in time and on earth.

APPENDIX A

A CRITIQUE OF HERETICAL PRETERISM

For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD*, they shall inherit the earth.*

PSALM 37:9

Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.

ISAIAH 56:11–12

Well, which will it be? Will evil-doers be cut off at the end of history, leaving Christians with the complete inheritance of the earth? In short, will there be a corporate final judgment at the end of the age that will end the effects of original sin on earth forever? Or, on the contrary, will evil-doers operate in history forever? The eschatological question is this: Is original sin eternal in history? The first position says *no*; the second says *yes*. Here are two irreconcilable views of the culmination of history and what will follow. Which one is correct?

A. The Universal Creeds

The church of Jesus Christ has always accepted the first view and has publicly denounced the second as heresy. The fourth century's three main creeds declared that there will be an end to evil and evil-doers at the end of history. God's final judgment will end the sin-cursed realm of nature, including the curse of sin in human nature. There will be a final separation of sinners and saints, goats and sheep. Sin will cease to be a factor in the world of the New Heaven and New Earth that fol-

lows God's final judgment. All of this has been so commonly believed among Christians for so long that there has been no debate over these tenets of the faith. But now there is.

1. Denying the Creeds

These fundamental eschatological precepts of the Christian faith are now being challenged by an unorganized group of creed-deniers who call themselves *full preterists*. One of them posted this statement on-line in July, 2001, in response to an early version of this appendix:

> 6. **Are the Nicene Creed and Apostles' Creed incorrect when they identify Christ's final judgment of the living and the dead as being in the future?**
>
> Absolutely.

At the end of this essay, I reprint the man's appendix on why the creeds are wrong. But, for now, be aware that I am not exaggerating. The spokesmen of this heretical movement are aware of what they are doing. Their agenda is clear: the reversal of Christian orthodoxy and its replacement by dualism, i.e., the doctrine that sin and righteousness necessarily exist side by side in history, and history will never end. Put theologically, this is the doctrine that the Fall of man will be operational in history forever. Or, as Walt Hibbert wrote in a lengthy private response—now much longer[1]—to my initial challenge,

> **God has already demonstrated for 2000+ years in history that he has chosen to use sin for the sanctification of his people, by allowing its presence on the earth to prepare His people for their entrance into Heaven after they physically die**. Would that so-called final generation be treated soteriologically different from the way that He has graciously treated His people for 2000+ years? Would God abandon the sanctification process for that one final generation?

The correct answers to his rhetorical questions are *yes* and *yes*.

Before dealing exegetically with this position, it is wise to survey what the church has taught on the issue of God's final judgment from its beginning, and which was placed into the church's earliest official common creeds and the Reformed Presbyterian confessions.

2. The Creeds' Affirmations

The Nicene Creed says this about the final judgment by Jesus Christ:

1. Hibbert's essay was posted on a preterist site that has shut down.

> He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

The Apostles Creed says this:

> He ascended into Heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the God the Father Almighty. From there he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

The Athanasian Creed says this:

> He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty, and from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. At his coming all people will rise again with their own bodies to answer for their personal deeds. Those who have done good will enter eternal life, but those who have done evil will go into everlasting fire.

It adds this warning: "This is the true Christian Faith. Whoever does not faithfully and firmly believe this cannot be saved."

In these formulations, God's final corporate judgment of both the resurrected living and the resurrected dead is said to take place in the future. It cannot have been an event in A.D. 70. This eschatological affirmation is denied by all heretical preterists.

This is the official eschatology of the Christian church. It has been so from the beginning, when the New Testament's texts were written. This view extended through the first three centuries of the church until the earliest creeds were formulated. The men who formulated the judicial statements that have defined the Christian faith institutionally had no doubt about what the New Testament teaches regarding the last days. The church has been clear for almost two millennia that anyone who denies these views is a heretic. Therefore he who denies this view of the future and who remains voluntarily as a member of the church is a subversive. He remains in the institutional church in order to undermine the Christian faith and steal God's church, as surely as Arius and his followers were subversives who were trying to capture the church for the devil.

3. The Protestant Reformation

We come now to the confessions in the Reformed Protestant tradition.

Article 37 of the Belgic Confession (1561), "Of the Last Judgment," says:

Finally we believe, according to the Word of God, when the time appointed by the Lord (which is unknown to all creatures) is come, and the number of the elect complete, that our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, corporally and visibly, as he ascended, with great glory and majesty to declare himself judge of the quick and the dead; burning this old world with fire and flame, to cleanse it. And then all men will personally appear before this great judge, both men and women and children, that have been from the beginning of the world to the end thereof, being summoned by the voice of the archangel, and by the sound of the trumpet of God. For all the dead shall be raised out of the earth, and their souls joined and united with their proper bodies, in which they formerly lived. As for those who shall then be living, they shall not die as the others, but be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and from corruptible, become incorruptible. Then the books (that is to say the consciences) shall be opened, and the dead judged according to what they shall have done in this world, whether it be good or evil. Nay, all men shall give an account of every idle word they have spoken, which the world only counts amusement and jest: and then the secrets and hypocrisy of men shall be disclosed and laid open before all. And therefore the consideration of this judgment, is justly terrible and dreadful to the wicked and ungodly, but most desirable and comfortable to the righteous and elect: because then their full deliverance shall be perfected, and there they shall receive the fruits of their labor and trouble which they have borne. Their innocence shall be known to all, and they shall see the terrible vengeance which God shall execute on the wicked, who most cruelly persecuted, oppressed and tormented them in this world; and who shall be convicted by the testimony of their own consciences, and being immortal, shall be tormented in that everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels. But on the contrary, the faithful and elect shall be crowned with glory and honor; and the Son of God will confess their names before God his Father, and his elect angels; all tears shall be wiped from their eyes; and their cause which is now condemned by many judges and magistrates, as heretical and impious, will then be known to be the cause of the Son of God. And for a gracious reward, the Lord will cause them to possess such a glory, as never entered into the heart of man to conceive. Therefore we expect that great day with a most ardent desire to the end that we may fully enjoy the promises of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. AMEN.

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), chapter 33, says:

I. God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged; but likewise all persons, that have lived upon earth, shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.

> II. The end of God's appointing this day, is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing which shall come from the presence of the Lord: but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.
>
> III. As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin, and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity: so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.

The WCF teaches the following. First, this event is still in the future. Second, it will lead to the eternal assembling of all the saints: "For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing which shall come from the presence of the Lord." Third, the fear of this future event should "deter all men from sin." The timing of this day is "unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come." There is an ethical aspect of this doctrine, which must be upheld by orthodox Christians.

The Westminster Assembly's Larger Catechism (1647) explicitly refers to the joining together of all the saints, which will occur at the time of the resurrection. Notice the reference to being caught up in the clouds. At that time, the transformed saints will judge the angels.

> Question 90: What shall be done to the righteous at the day of judgment?
>
> Answer: At the day of judgment, the righteous, being caught up to Christ in the clouds, shall be set on his right hand, and there openly acknowledged and acquitted, shall join with him in the judging of reprobate angels and men, and shall be received into heaven, where they shall be fully and forever freed from all sin and misery; filled with inconceivable joys, made perfectly holy and happy both in body and soul, in the company of innumerable saints and holy angels, but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to all eternity. And this is the perfect and full communion, which the members of the invisible church shall enjoy with Christ in glory, at the resurrection and day of judgment.

This will be the unification of the saints: "perfect and full communion." The church militant will disappear: "they shall be fully and

forever freed from all sin and misery." The church triumphant will replace it entirely: "filled with inconceivable joys, made perfectly holy and happy both in body and soul, in the company of innumerable saints and holy angels, but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to all eternity."

In summary, these detailed Reformation statements define the doctrine of the final judgment for Reformed denominations. While lay members are not required to affirm these statements as a condition of communicant membership, elders are so required. The elders of local congregations determine which beliefs are required for communicant membership. Some local congregations are loose in their enforcement of theology. Others are rigorous. But any congregation that allows non-ordained members to promote beliefs that run counter to the denomination's formal statements of faith are thereby allowing those with a different confession to pursue their clandestine agendas at the expense of members who uphold the confessions.

Each church tradition has defining documents. These documents are used judicially to screen church officers. These documents are designed to be used judicially. Those people who oppose the theological contents of these screening devices are unofficially invited to keep out. Those who have achieved membership and who then adopt views counter to the denomination's formal statement of faith should be officially told to cease speaking about their views or else leave the church voluntarily. If they refuse to stop and refuse to leave, then contumacy is involved. They can and should be tried for contumacy and removed from membership through public excommunication.

When you think "screening," think "Arius." Had the early church not screened Arius and his followers by means of a judicially enforceable confession, Trinitarianism would not have prevailed. The church, had it survived, would now be some variant of the Jehovah's Witnesses or Islam: unitarian. Heretics, once in power, know how to screen out their opponents, as the Arians demonstrated for two decades after the Nicene Creed was officially adopted (325). Athanasius was on the run for the rest of his life, because of his orthodoxy. But the defenders of the Nicene Creed had visibly triumphed by 381. We are the heirs of their triumph, a triumph based on excommunication and the formal screening of candidates for ordination.

Without sanctions, there is no law. *Without excommunication, there is no orthodoxy*.

Confessions of faith are an inescapable concept. It is never a case of confession of faith vs. no confession of faith. It is always a question of the content of the confession of faith and the people in charge of enforcing it.

B. Heresy Is a Reaction Against Orthodoxy

Heresies in the church begin as rival theologies, based on philosophies developed outside the church, and then are presented to the church as a new, improved orthodoxy. Alien philosophies of God, man, law, historical causation, and time and eternity are reworked to fit Scriptural terminology and concepts. They spread within the church as supposed clarifications of an original true Christianity. To remove these heresies from the church, theologians and pastors must first recognize them as alien imports. This is why J. Gresham Machen wrote *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923): to identify the heresy of theological liberalism as an alien religion, the religion of sovereign, covenant-breaking man.[2]

In this brief study, I identify the theological origin what is clearly a heretical version of what is known as preterism. Preterism argues that most, but not all, of the prophecies of the New Testament were fulfilled at the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Heretical preterism argues that all of these prophecies were fulfilled in A.D. 70. Preterism is not taught in any of the church's creeds or confessions, nor is it rejected. In contrast, the conclusions of heretical preterism are denied by the creeds and confessions. The more forthright of the heretical preterists admit this publicly.

In order to understand this heretical theology, the reader first needs to know where the heresy comes into conflict with orthodoxy. In two passages above all others in Scripture, the conflict becomes inescapable: I Corinthians 15 and Revelation 20.

Paul set forth the orthodox view of the final judgment in his account the Christ's second coming. He spoke of an inheritance that is closed to men in sinful flesh.

> Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For

2. Gary North, *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1996), Part 3.

> this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (I Cor. 15:50–55)[3]

Paul's discussion of the final judgment is the consummation of this epistle-long argument regarding judgment in general. He had pointed to the final judgment in chapter 3: "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (vv. 12–15). At the final judgment, every covenant-keeper's work will be judged retroactively by God. "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (v. 15). But every person's work will be judged and rewarded accordingly.

First Corinthians 15 might be interpreted as referring only to heaven. John undermined this interpretation. Revelation 20 provides additional information regarding (1) the historical events that immediately precede the final judgment, (2) the physical resurrection of the dead, and (3) the post-resurrection state of covenant-breakers.

> And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man

3. Chapter 17.

> according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:7–15).

What is the first death, if the second death is the lake of fire? There is only one possibility: the physical death of each individual. Yet even here, there is a legitimate hope that it will be avoided by a few. Paul teaches elsewhere that at the final judgment, covenant-keepers who are alive at the time of Christ's bodily return will escape the first death.

> But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (I Thes. 4:13–18).

Those who "sleep with Jesus" have passed through the first death that separates history from heaven. They will accompany Jesus when He returns bodily in final judgment. Some people will be alive at the time when Christ returns with the trumpet and a shout. This will be no secret Rapture. This will be a public event—the most public event in the history of man. The dead in Christ will rise. This cannot mean "spiritually dead," for in Christ, no one is spiritually dead. It refers to physical death. Those covenant-keepers who are still alive in their physical bodies will be caught up with the resurrected dead into the clouds.

C. Corruption and Incorruption

Paul teaches in I Corinthians 15 that those covenant-keepers who have not experienced what John would have called the first death, and who are therefore still burdened by sin and its curse, will join those covenant-keepers who return with Christ. For this to take place, they must be delivered from original sin and its curse, death. This will take place prior to their ascent into the sky. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (v. 52).

This has to take place before the ascent because corruption cannot inherit incorruption. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (v. 53). This is Paul's theme of inheritance in this chapter. Eschatology has to do with point five of the biblical covenant model: inheritance.[4] Paul is speaking here of the nature of the covenant-keeper's inheritance on judgment day. He will inherit incorruption. Whether he will subsequently receive rewards of gold, silver, and precious stones depends on God's retroactive judgment of his work, but he will inherit incorruption, which begins with the transformation of his death-cursed physical body and his sin-ravaged soul.

> And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (vv. 45–55)

The theological issue here is the separate physical condition of what the English-language version of the Apostles' Creed calls the quick and the dead. Covenant-keepers are spiritually alive in history. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). But there is a difference between the celestial body, which covenant-keepers inherit at the time of their physical death, and the earthly body, which they must occupy in history. This difference cannot be bridged by sinful men, not even at the last trump. They must receive their celestial bodies before they can be joined with covenant-keepers

4. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 5.

who have already received their celestial bodies. The dead in Christ will rise first (I Thes. 4:16). All flesh is not the same flesh, and the two cannot mingle together.

> But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption (vv. 38–50).

There can be and has been mingling in history between men and sin-free angels, but angels are not members of the church. They are not part of the bride of Christ (body of Christ), which the church is. There was also mingling between incorruption and corruption in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, but He was born of a woman by the Holy Spirit. He was God as well as a perfect man. God can mingle with sinful men.

A biblical example of mingling in history between sinful humans and a deceased saint is Samuel's appearance to Saul and the witch of Endor. Calling him up from the grave was a major sin on the part of Saul, and he lost his kingdom and his life the next day because of it. Samuel told him: "Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines" (I Sam. 28:19). The judgment on Saul was an extension of his sin. Saul and his sons would soon mingle with the dead. His family's kingly inheritance in Israel would end.

D. Church Militant and Church Triumphant

The difference between the church in history and the church in heaven has long been acknowledged in the two terms applied to the church's two branches. The church in history is called the church militant. The church in heaven is called the church triumphant.

The distinguishing feature between them is not spiritual warfare with Satan. It is not that the church in heaven has in some way been taken out of the spiritual battle against Satan. We know this because of what John records in Revelation 6:

> And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled (Rev. 6:9–11).

The saints in heaven remain in the fight against Satan, interceding with God on behalf of the church militant. In this context, "triumphant" refers to the heavenly church's perfect victory over sin and corruption. Original sin no longer afflicts its members.

In contrast, the church in history is still afflicted with sin. It is still in the great ethical war against the kingdom of Satan. In heaven, the church has been transformed. Sin is no longer a problem. Incorruption has inherited incorruption in heaven. There is more to inherit, of course, for the bodily resurrection of all mankind still lies ahead. The final judgment lies ahead. "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (II Peter 3:7). The post-resurrection transformation of the world after the final judgment has not yet taken place (Rev. 21; 22). But, in heaven, there is a preliminary inheritance of incorruption, beginning with the church's complete victory over sin, which is the inheritance that counts most in the warfare between good and evil. Jesus made this clear in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). The ability to do the will of God perfectly is the greatest inheritance of all.

Because those who occupy corrupt bodies cannot do the will of God perfectly, as those in heaven do it, which is why they are required

to pray this prayer, the two realms of the church are separated by a great gulf. So also are heaven and hell, and for the same reason. The sinner in hell remains a sinner. There is no good remaining in him. Jesus revealed in his parable of Lazarus the beggar and the rich man that the spiritual gulf that exists after the first death is permanent.

> And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence (Luke 16:22–26).

The decisive issue here is original sin. Sin's presence and its curse afflict the soul: in history (all mankind) and in eternity (covenant-breakers). God does transform each covenant-keeper's sin-cursed soul, either at the first death, or, in the unique case of those still alive at the time of Christ's second coming at the final judgment, without any transition through the first death. Those covenant-keepers who will be graced by God by being alive at the time of Christ's Second Coming will be like Elijah: carried up into the sky without having to go into the ground or the sea in burial.

So, the terms "corruption" and "incorruption" refer to original sin and its effects. The word "corruption" refers both to men in history and covenant-breakers in eternity. In neither case can corruption inherit incorruption. Sin's great gulf separates covenant-keepers from their incorrupt inheritance until after the first death. Everything good which they possess in history is an earnest, or down payment, on their future inheritance.

> Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts (II Cor. 1:21–22).

> For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body,

> we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord (II Cor. 5:4–8).

Will all of the members of God's church ever celebrate together in a joint victory over sin? Put another way, will there be any time in history when all covenant-keepers will be able to mingle together in a joint operation? The answer is *no*. A great gulf separates sin-cursed covenant-keepers from sin-free covenant-keepers. So, if there is ever to be sin-free fellowship by all members of the church, then original sin's presence and its curse must be removed entirely.

E. Final Judgments in Matthew 25

Matthew 25 contains two parables and a prophecy. The parables are specific. They describe the kingdom of heaven. This means that they describe a single corporate entity which is still in existence. They tell of judgment: a final reckoning or accounting. The third section of the passage, the prophecy of the sheep and the goats, does not mention the kingdom. The expositor's task is to keep these categories straight. There is one common theme: final judgment.

1. The Parable of the 10 Virgins

The first parable presents the story of the bridegroom who comes in judgment.

> Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh (Matt. 25:1–13).

Christ used a variation of the phrase, "I know you not," in the same eschatological context—final judgment—in another passage.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:21–23).

Both of these passages can be applied to God's judgment on Old Covenant Israel, which was final. The question is: Must this be their exclusive application? The kingdom of heaven in Matthew refers to the kingdom of God in history. The Old Covenant order still was part of God's kingdom in Christ's day. There will be final judgment, Jesus taught. The final judgment on Old Covenant Israel, which was still in the future when Christ spoke these words, took place at the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The final judgment on the church will be the final judgment at the end of time. Wise virgins keep oil in their lamps. Unwise virgins do not. The latter will be caught short, Christ taught. This warning applied to Old Covenant Israel. Because the kingdom is still operating in history, it will also apply to self-deceived church members at the end of time. At the final judgment, there will be self-deceived people who have run out of oil.

The parable of the 10 virgins pictures a kingdom in which half the participants are on duty, and the other half are not. This applies to the church and Old Covenant Israel. Jesus was warning His listeners, who included representatives of both branches of the kingdom during the era of transition, that they should remain faithful, alert, and on the job. At the fall of Jerusalem, judgment came on members of the half associated with Old Covenant Israel. The other half survived, because they had paid attention to Christ's words in Matthew 24 (Luke 21). Their survival meant that they possessed exclusive title to the kingdom of God, just as Christ had warned the Jews: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43).

The term "kingdom" applied in Jesus' day to both the New Covenant church and Old Covenant Israel. It no longer does. It now applies only to the church. This means that the parable of the 10 virgins now applies exclusively to the church. It indicates that within the church on the final day of judgment that will end Satan's kingdom, there will be unprepared church members who will be caught short. There will be covenant-breakers within the church at the final judg-

ment. Original sin will still be a problem. This parable describes the kingdom of heaven, which still operates in history. Thus, we should conclude that its warning still applies to history. There will be an unexpected day of corporate reckoning. Keep oil in your lamp.

2. A Long Journey and a Final Accounting

The next parable in Matthew 25 presents the story of a rich man who leaves a great deal of gold behind for his workers to invest. This indicates a long period of stewardship. The Greek text does not mention the kingdom. The translators inserted the phrase on the assumption—reasonable—that this parable also describes the kingdom. Again, Jesus was telling His disciples to be diligent workers. This warning applies to every Christian throughout history. That it also applied to the Jews in Jesus' day is equally true. Their long time of testing was about to end. They were about to be forced to give an account of their stewardship. The kingdom was about to be taken from them and transferred to the church.

In the parallel version in Luke, this information is added. "But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). The king brings final judgment against them: "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27). In Luke's version, the poor steward is not said to be cast into outer darkness, as the servant in Matthew is (Matt. 25:30). What little he had was taken from him and given to the most profitable servant (Luke 19:24). Jews literally died in A.D. 70. In the future final judgment, covenant-breakers will die the second death. "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14–15).

In both versions of this parable, the profitable servants receive rewards based on their prior performance. "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt. 25:21). "And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over 10 cities (Luke 19:17). This testifies to an extension of life on earth. Their venue does not change. What they have achieved in history will lead to greater authority and therefore greater responsibility in a post-judgment world. This testifies to a post-res-

urrection world that will have continuity with this one, but without the presence of evil-doers: a major discontinuity. With respect to the final judgment on Old Covenant Israel, the church inherited everything associated with the kingdom. In the post-resurrection world, the church will inherit the earth, which will then become co-extensive with God's kingdom.

What was final for Old Covenant Israel in A.D. 70 was at the same time the beginning of the church's exclusive monopoly of title for the kingdom of God/heaven. The inheritance of Old Covenant Israel in A.D. 70 was passed exclusively to the church. This kingdom still operates in history. The progressive extension of the kingdom by the church is described in the parable of the rich man: his departure, his long journey, and his return. The next accounting will be final. It will end the long period of history that the Bible defines as the kingdom of God/heaven.

With respect to the church, the time was short before the judgment came on Old Covenant Israel. Yet this parable speaks of a ruler who goes on a long journey. This indicates that Jesus looked ahead and saw two judgments: on Old Covenant Israel, as the culmination of its long period of poor stewardship, and the final judgment, as the culmination of the church's long period of stewardship.

3. Sheep and Goats Assembled, Yet Separated

Next comes something very different from the two kingdom parables. The final section of Matthew 25 deals with the final judgment at the end of time: the sheep and the goats. This passage is not limited to the kingdom of God. What it describes is a general judgment.

> When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (vv. 31–34).

> Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (v. 41).

The goats here are corporately separated from the sheep. Why? Paul tells us why in I Corinthians 15, which also declares an absolute separation: celestial bodies vs. terrestrial bodies, spiritual bodies vs.

natural bodies, incorrupt bodies vs. corrupt bodies. They will never mingle. This prohibition on mingling applies to the sheep. When God finally judges sin and its effects, he will bring together all of the members of His church, but none of them will be in a terrestrial body. This is why all covenant-keepers who are alive at Christ's second coming will have their bodies changed before they meet the returning saints from heaven. With respect to the goats, there is separation from the sheep because sin and its effects are still with the goats. They will not receive purified bodies and souls at the resurrection, for Christ's perfect humanity was not imputed to them by God in history. Their moral corruption extends into eternity. Therefore, they cannot mingle with the sheep. The wall of separation will be maintained throughout eternity, just as it is maintained between heaven and hell today.

To argue that sin-cursed covenant-keepers and sin-free covenant-keepers can operate jointly, either in heaven or in history, is to deny what Paul and Christ clearly taught regarding this mandatory separation. This is a major argument against any version of popular premillennialism which teaches that heavenly saints will return to rule in history alongside sin-burdened saints. (The professionally trained theologians of the dispensational movement, such as J. Dwight Pentecost,[5] have fully understood this and have taught against any "mixed multitude" of saints during the millennium.) But there is a related heresy, as we shall see. To argue in favor of the permanent separation, but then to conclude that the church must be separated throughout eternity into two parts—celestial and terrestrial—because the church militant will always coexist with the church triumphant, is to deny the final judgment's bringing together of both branches of the church through the discontinuous transformation of the pre-first death members of Christ's bride: from corruption into incorruption. This eschatology—really, an anti-eschatology (no last things)—denies the literal historical fulfillment of Paul's prophecy regarding the future resurrection of the sin-free physical bodies of the saints, who have died the first death in Christ, to be joined with their sin-free souls returning to earth from heaven. It also denies the future transformation from corruption to incorruption of the bodies and souls of living and breathing covenant-keepers at the time of Christ's coming at the final judgment.

5. "Thus the millennial age will be concerned only with men who have been saved but are living in their natural bodies." J. Dwight Pentecost, "The Relation between Living and Resurrected Saints in The Millennium," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 117 (Oct. 1960), p. 341.

There were two final judgments in Christ's teachings: the one that ended the Old Covenant order in A.D. 70, and the other that will end Satan's kingdom in history. The two parables in Matthew 25 were therefore warnings to the Jews, but also still serve as warnings to Christians. The still unfulfilled prophecy of the sheep and the goats refers to covenant-keepers in general and covenant-breakers in general. Old Covenant Israel has nothing to do with it.

F. Heretical Preterism

Preterism is an interpretation of biblical prophecies that argues that many, but not all, of the New Testament's prophecies of judgment were fulfilled in A.D. 70 with the Roman army's destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the defeat of Israel's rebellion. This interpretation has been around for centuries. It is generally associated with postmillennialism, but there is nothing in preterism that cannot be accepted by amillennialists. It is because J. Marcellus Kik's short books, *Revelation 20* and *Matthew 24*, revived interest in preterism a generation ago that postmillennialism is closely associated with this view. Kik was a postmillennialist, and so was R. J. Rushdoony, who encouraged the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company to publish Kik's two short books in one paperback, *An Eschatology of Victory* (1971). It is quite possible for an amillennialist to hold classic preterism, just as C. Vanderwaal does.[6]

Classic preterism argues that the key to understanding the prophecies of Matthew 24 is verse 34: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Everything prior to this verse was fulfilled by the fall of Jerusalem. In contrast, the separation of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 has always been seen by the church as referring to the final judgment. Heretical preterism contends that Matthew 25 is governed by the prophetic time frame of Matthew 24:34. Indeed, all New Testament prophecy is said to be governed by this verse. As heretical preterist J. Stuart Russell asked rhetorically in 1878, "What can be more comprehensive and conclusive than our Lord's words, 'Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled'?"[7] The point is, this

6. C. Vanderwaal, *Hal Lindsey and Biblical Prophecy* (Neerlander, Alberta: Inheritance Publications, [1978] 1991).

7. J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*, new edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, [no date] 1983), p. 545.

passage is not comprehensive. It applies to the events described in Matthew 24, but we may not legitimately assume that it covers every eschatological passage in the New Testament, which is what heretical preterists assume and then attempt to prove. In this attempt, they wind up in one of two camps: dualism or perfectionism-Pelagianism, as we shall see.

A dualist believes in the eternality of evil. There will be no final judgment in history. There will never be a time in history when men are free from sin. History, cursed by sin, is eternal. It operates side-by-side heaven. The New Heavens and New Earth will always be sin-cursed. Satan's successful entrapment of Adam will have its effects throughout eternity. God will never overcome sin in history.

Heretical preterism is an interpretation of biblical prophecies that argues that all of the New Testament's prophecies of judgment were fulfilled in A.D. 70. To argue that all of the prophecies concerning God's final judgment were fulfilled in A.D. 70 is to take a public stand against Paul's teaching regarding the final inheritance of incorruption only by incorruption. It is also to reject the historic creeds of the church. The heretical preterists deny the creeds of the church on this point, which is why they are heretical ecclesiastically. They deny Paul with regard to the final overcoming of sin in history—the full inheritance of incorruption by incorruption—which is why they are heretical theologically. They proclaim "full preterism," which denies the full inheritance of incorruption in the future. Corruption must remain the permanent incomplete inheritance of the church militant.

Because heretical preterists believe that God's final judgment is behind us historically—A.D. 70—most of them (probably all of them) also believe that sin is eternal. Sin is with the church today in this, the supposedly post-final-judgment world. They insist that there is no future eschatological event that will transform this world. "What we see now is what we Christians will get in history forever." There is therefore no hope of deliverance from sin in history, and no hope of deliverance from history for the church militant. Because preterism is not necessarily postmillennial, this position can be interpreted as teaching that the church militant will suffer ever-more grievously at the hands of covenant-breakers in history, which will never end. Surely, it means at least this: there must forever be a separation between the church militant and the church triumphant. The Lord's Prayer will never be answered: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10b). Heaven's perfection is forever denied to history, which

is infinite in duration. The church militant must forever struggle with sin and its effects. Satan's work of treachery in the garden will never be finally and completely overcome.

There are two ways to affirm this heretical position in the name of Christianity. First, deny that Satan is ever fully judged and cut off from history. Second—and this is the heretical preterist's position—affirm that Satan was finally judged in A.D. 70, but sin lives on in mankind in history, which is eternal. That is, sin has been forever cut off from any connection with Satan and his fallen angels, and is forever part of history. Thus, the following is no longer the case:

> Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:11–12).

Supposedly, Christians since A.D. 70 have been at war, not with principalities and powers, but only with their own independent sinfulness. Satan and the principalities have been out of the picture. This theological position was affirmed in a private letter to me by a predestinarian who adopted heretical preterism a decade ago. The author, Walt Hibbert, later put an expanded version on the Web. On page 12 of his 16-page paper dated August, 2001, he wrote the following: "Since Satan, therefore, was cast into the lake of fire at A.D. 70, giving the Lord complete victory over him, he is not a force to be reckoned with, either by the Church Militant or the Church Triumphant, since that time." He even quotes Walt Kelley, the cartoonist who put these words in Pogo Possum's mouth: "We have found the enemy, and it is us!" Walt Kelley was funny. Walt Hibbert is not.

Sin is eternal in this man's view. There will never be a final overcoming of sin in history or eternity, for history is coterminous with eternity. Responding to me (in this instance, accurately), he wrote: "He [North] demands a visible manifestation of sin being completely removed from the earth. He obviously is looking for an extreme literal fulfillment of this covenantal concept of deliverance from sin. The Scripture teaches otherwise" (p. 12). This is the heresy of dualism, pure and simple. He is clearly no perfectionist. He is therefore a dualist. This heretical preterist insists that death will reign in history forever. In effect, he answers Paul's rhetorical question "O, death, where is thy sting?" with this: "Forever."

But what of the final judgment? A myth, he says. "The phrase 'fi-

nal judgment' does not appear in Scripture." My response to this bit of sophistry is simple: neither does the word "Trinity."

This view of history and eternity stands in opposition to what every branch of the Trinitarian church has taught throughout recorded history. This man knows this and is proud—immensely proud—of it. He responds to my defense of the creeds as follows:

> Our author definitely makes it clear where his supreme authority lies. It's not the Bible; it is the historic creeds that are really his final authority. . . . The cry of some pseudo-preterists seems to be best expressed in the words: "Abandon Sola Scriptura—back to Rome.

This man is a sophist, and not a very skilled one. The creeds that I have cited are fourth-century creeds. Any orthodox Christian who defends the Trinity goes to them. Is this "back to Rome"? No; it is back to ecclesiastical orthodoxy. There is no institutional orthodoxy without creeds. This man, in the name of Calvin and the Reformation, throws out Nicea because he knows that it brands him and his fellows as heretics. He also abandons the Belgic Confession and the Westminster Confession, in the name of Reformed Presbyterianism (which he claims to represent). *This is subversion*. Mark it well.

Until recently, the heretical nature of their position has been downplayed by the system's own public defenders. They have preferred, for tactical and perhaps personal psychological reasons, to avoid discussing the obvious implications of their position. If they enthusiastically and continually declared their view of history as sin-cursed forever, they would eventually be excommunicated. Their main spokesmen have preferred to avoid this. But now a few of them are growing bolder than the more cautious founders, as late-arrival heretics eventually do. They will force the hand of the leaders, just as my original essay forced their hand. That was my original intent: to force a few of them to defend their heresy forthrightly in public. Now one of them has, on-line. For this, I am grateful. May his colleagues have equal courage. David Green responded in July, 2001. I reproduce his answers, word for word, at the end of this essay. When you read them, you will know why I have called for the excommunication of anyone who persists in defending these views.

If these people do get excommunicated, they will have to fund their own churches with their own money. This is as it should be. They should not redefine the meaning of common words in Scripture in order to make their secret, "insiders-only" positions seem

more acceptable to naive church members who have not examined the details of their system. They should all forcefully say in public that the historic creeds are wrong and therefore not binding on them as church members. They should have the courage to challenge the elders in their congregations to publicly abandon or rewrite both the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed. It is time for heretical preterists to come clean in public and confidently declare their belief in the eternal separation of the church militant and the church triumphant, challenging all of their theological opponents to refute them, to excommunicate them if they dare. To do less than this is to substitute a strategy of subversion for open theological discussion. It is time for them publicly to answer Paul's rhetorical question, "O death, where is thy sting?" with the only answer that is consistent with their system: "In history and forever."

The implications of this position are numerous. First, God will never bring history to a close; thus, good and evil will battle for the minds and souls of men eternally. Second, because corruption cannot inherit incorruption, as most heretical preterists acknowledge when pressed, the continuity of corruption in history makes impossible any inheritance of perfection in some post-resurrection New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21; 22). The only New Heaven and New Earth that Christians will ever obtain in their physical bodies is an extension of what Christians experience now. Third, Paul's promise of the eschatological transformation of the creation at the final judgment (I Cor. 15:24–25, 42–50) is seen as applying not to the creation but to the individual's transformation at death. Corruption in history is eternal. Terrestrial bodies will occupy the earth for as long as celestial bodies praise God in heaven. Fourth, covenant-breakers possess equally valid eschatological claims to the earth as covenant-keepers do. The tares will occupy the field of history eternally, right alongside the wheat. Matthew 13 will never come to pass as the end of history: "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (vv. 40–42).

Anyone who equates the fulfillment of this prophecy with A.D. 70 has broken with the historic faith of the church. Such a view stands out most clearly in its rejection of the post-resurrection fulfillment of verse 43: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the king-

dom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Heretical preterists refuse to hear.

Sometimes heretics help us to hear more clearly. They pressure us to do our homework. One place to begin is a book edited by Keith Matheson, *When Shall These Things Be?*, which is published by P&R Books. But the following ought to be sufficient.

G. The Deviant Theology of J. Stuart Russell

When a pastor discovers that someone in his congregation believes what the member calls full preterism, it would be wise for the pastor to devote several sermons to refuting the heretical version of preterism, most notably the views of J. Stuart Russell. Russell's book is a common, agreed-upon source for contemporary proponents of heretical preterism. If the member can be made to say to the elders, "But I don't believe what Russell taught," the elders will have left the member theologically defenseless. To refute Russell is to refute the theological foundation for modern heretical preterism, at least in Presbyterian and Reformed circles. It is not worth your time to interact with numerous epigone who have adopted Russell's theology. They want you to interact with them. Interaction appears to give them credibility. I recommend that you forego the opportunity. As the old saying goes, "you don't need to eat all of a rotten apple to know it's rotten." Once you refute Russell, you have refuted his followers.

Russell taught that the parable of the 10 virgins refers exclusively to the imminent fall of Jerusalem. He also taught that the separation of sheep and goats described in Matthew 25 refers exclusively to this event. "The parables of the ten virgins, the talents, and the sheep and the goats all belong to this same event, and are fulfilled in the judgment of Israel."[8] Also fulfilled in A.D. 70 was the bodily resurrection of the dead, he said. "The resurrection of the dead, the judgment of the world, and the casting out of Satan are represented as coincident with the Parousia, and near at hand."[9] Here is his general principle of prophetic interpretation:

> We have in these passages another new phrase in connexion with the approaching consummation, which is peculiar to the Fourth Gospel. We never find in the Synoptics the expression 'the last day,' although we do find its equivalents, 'that day,' and 'the day of judgment.' It cannot be doubted that these expressions are synonymous, and refer to the same

8. Russell, *Parousia*, p. 140.
9. *Ibid*., pp. 139–40.

> period. But we have already seen that the judgment is contemporaneous with the 'end of the age ' (sonteleia ton aiwnoj), and we infer that ' the last day' is only another form of the expression 'the end of the age or Aeon.' The Parousia also is constantly represented as coincident in point of time with the 'end of the age,' so that all these great events, the Parousia, the resurrection of the dead, the judgment, and the last day, are contemporaneous. Since, then, the end of the age is not, as is generally imagined, the *end of the world*, or total destruction of the earth, but the close *of the Jewish economy*; and since our Lord Himself distinctly and frequently places that event within the limits of the existing generation, we conclude that the Parousia the resurrection, the judgment, and the last day, all belong to the period of the destruction of Jerusalem.[10]

1. Heresy by Stealth

Russell's book is an example of *heresy by stealth*, assuming that he believed in the doctrine of original sin. By relegating to A.D. 70 all of the New Testament's passages that relate to the final judgment, Russell implicitly introduced a variant of dualism: the eternality of evil as a force in history. I can well understand why he refused to put his name on the first edition of his book in 1878.[11] He wanted to "test the waters" before he identified himself in public. Why else would he insist that his book be published anonymously, the same way that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* in 1848.

Given the fact of original sin, which is permanent in corrupt mankind, Russell's eschatology is dualistic, but he moves his disciples to this position by default. As a result of his theology, they initially decide what they do *not* believe about eschatology—the final, comprehensive, worldwide inheritance of incorruption by incorruption—but they rarely publicly announce what they, by default, *must* believe about the future: an eternal conflict between good and evil. Russell was as subtle as a serpent, for he held the formal theology of the serpent: the eternality of the historical kingdom of Satan.

2. Dualism

Russell's language at the end of his book indicates that he was a postmillennialist. He was not. He was a dualist. If he was not a dualist, then he was a perfectionist and a Pelagian. Some perfectionists teach that a sinner can overcome original sin through self-discipline under God. Others teach that perfection is attained at the time of

10. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

regeneration—not merely Christ's perfect moral status imputed to him legally, but His perfect moral status worked out historically. Pelagianism teaches that, in theory, some people need not ever sin at all, from womb to tomb.

Russell began the final section of his book with a crucial admission: the Bible is silent regarding the future of history. For him, the Bible is silent about eschatology—the last things—because all New Testament prophecy was fulfilled in A.D. 70. He writes: "Here we might pause, for Scripture prophecy guides us no further."[12] He spoke of history as if it were open-ended eschatologically—the essence of dualism in a world where original sin exists. His next sentence is important in this regard: "But the close of the aeon is not the end of the world, and the fate of Israel teaches us nothing respecting the destiny of the human race."[13] He was wrong. Christ's corporate judgment of the Old Covenant order in A.D. 70 teaches Christians to expect a future corporate judgment of the whole world. After a long period, from Abraham's call until A.D. 70, Christ returned to require a final accounting from that nation which had long possessed the kingdom of God. At that time, He transferred His kingdom to the church (Matt. 21:43), which is now an international institution, a new nation. He will come again in judgment to require a final corporate accounting from His people and from all mankind, as John taught in Revelation 20:12–15.

Russell continued: "Whether we will or no, we cannot help speculating about the future. . . ." Here he identified all statements about the church's future as mere speculation. This was because his hermeneutic applies all biblical prophecy to A.D. 70. There is supposedly nothing left over to guide Christians or the church regarding the future. *For the brief remainder of the book, he cited not one passage that deals explicitly with prophecy*. How could he? He had already squandered exegetically on A.D. 70 the church's eschatological inheritance. So, he speculated. What he proposed bore a superficial resemblance to postmillennialism's view of the future. But a postmillennialism that is stripped of all Bible passages relating either to prophecy or to eschatology—last things—is merely a disguised importation into the church of either the late nineteenth century's pop-Darwinian ideal of moral progress or else perfectionism-Pelagianism.

Russell then invoked the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10b). He commented: "For every God-

12. *Ibid.*, p. 549.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 549.

taught prayer contains a prophecy, and conveys a promise."[14] Indeed, it does. This corporate prayer ("our Father," not "my Father") asks for corporate perfection: life on earth will someday be as sin-free as life in heaven. It asks for a world in which the church militant will follow the will of God on earth with the same success as the church triumphant does now. This can be achieved in only one way: by completely removing sin from the world. *The church militant must be transformed into the church triumphant*. This will be done discontinuously, Paul taught: in the twinkling of an eye (I Cor. 15:52). Perfection for sinful man can never be the culmination of the compound growth of righteousness over sin in history. Man is burdened by original sin. The effects of original sin are in his very being. Moral corruption is a permanent condition in every man in history, Paul taught (Rom. 7). It can be overcome only by the discontinuous intervention of God: either at the individual's death or at the last trump. In history, no person can ever escape this limitation: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). The perfectionist denies this, which is why he is a heretic.[15]

Russell denied that there will be a last trump. There will be no final corporate transformation of the church militant. The church militant is eternal, as far as the Bible tells us, if we apply every passage dealing with final judgment to A.D. 70. Russell imported an alien imitation of postmillennialism to match his alien concept of *time without end*. He wrote: "The true implication of New Testament prophecy, instead of leaving us in darkness, encourages hope. It relieves the gloom which hung over a world which was believed to be destined to perish. There is no reason to infer that because Jerusalem was destroyed the world must burn; or, because the apostate nation was condemned, the human race must be consigned to perdition. All sinister anticipation rests upon an erroneous interpretation of Scripture; and, the fallacies being cleared away, the prospect brightens with a glorious hope."[16] Some hope: the ethical progress of the church militant in history, with no prospect of a discontinuous deliverance from the curse of death, or deliverance from the burden of original sin, or the final victory of God over His covenantal enemies in history. Some hope: the eternality of original sin and its curses in history.

14. *Ibid*., p. 553.

15. B. B. Warfield, *Studies in Perfectionism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, [1931] 1958).

16. Russell, *Parousia*, pp. 551–52.

Unless. . . . Unless Russell did not believe in original sin. He ended his book on this upbeat note: "This world belongs no more to the devil, but to God. Christ will redeem it, and will recover it, and draw all men unto him."[17] This may mean progressive sanctification without final sanctification, i.e., the permanence of residual sin forever: a heresy (dualism). If it does not mean this, then it must mean absolute perfection in history: a heresy (perfectionism). It would therefore mean that Christians can escape original sin in history: a heresy (Pelagianism).

Russell was not a postmillennialist, despite a superficial resemblance. He was either a happy-face dualist or else a perfectionist-Pelagian. Whichever he was, he was heretical, and not just a little heretical. He stood in defiance of the church's creeds and confessions on the question of the final judgment, and in doing so, he adopted either an implicit dualism or else multiple explicit heresies that deny the permanence of original sin in history.

This is always the reality of heresy. You cannot limit heresy to just one. To adopt one forces you to adopt others. Russell's official heresy was his denial of the final judgment. He chose not to name his accompanying heresy (dualism) or heresies (perfectionism-Pelagianism), but they are inevitable implications of his system nonetheless.

Russell's modern disciples can successfully refute my accusation that he was a dualist only by arguing that he was a perfectionist and a Pelagian. This will do them little good if they are brought to trial in churches that adhere to the teachings of John Calvin. (Lutheranism's official amillennialism is sufficient to condemn them in Lutheran churches.) If they are found to be promoting heretical preterism in a Presbyterian church, they will find no theological support for any denial of their dualism by an affirmation of perfectionism-Pelagianism. On the other hand, if they are not perfectionists or Pelagians, then they are dualists. Take your pick.

I pick dualism for them. This is because I see Russell's theology as offering an indefinite extension of time to Satan and/or Satan's legacy to man: original sin. Russell says that the world belongs to God. So what? God has always owned the world. Original sin is nevertheless a force that can be overcome in men only by God's discontinuous translation of their bodies: terrestrial bodies into celestial. Only if Russell did not believe in original sin—and on this, he was silent—was he not a dualist.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 553.

If he was not a dualist, then the two key theological questions regarding his theology are these. First, on what theological basis can any Christian argue that original sin will be completely removed in history? Second, how much time has God allotted to history, i.e., the realm in which original sin operates, and the church militant struggles continually to overcome sin progressively? It is clear that Russell denied any future, final, and *discontinuous* corporate judgment of the world by God. He was therefore unquestionably heretical—a man who was wise initially to publish his book anonymously. It is clear that he also denied any future, final, and *discontinuous* corporate deliverance of the church militant from the bondage and curse of original sin. He was therefore unquestionably heretical.

His disciples now have the moral responsibility of deciding which of his possible heresies to accept by remaining his disciples: either dualism or a combined package of perfectionism-Pelagianism. There is no orthodox theological way out for any follower of Russell who affirms the doctrine of original sin. By adopting Russell's theory of world history without a final corporate judgment, but also without Russell's perfectionism and Pelagianism, he must affirm dualism: a world without end and also without deliverance from sin. This view grants to Satan what the creeds and confessions deny: influence in history forever.

I recommend demanding an immediate public recantation and personal repentance of Russell's theology. Barring this, I recommend the heretic's excommunication by his church's judicial body. But an excommunicant always retains his liberty of conscience. He has his choice among several possible Russellite heresies. Russell was a very creative theologian. He offered so many ways for his followers to drift into heresy! The elders should allow the accused member to identify the heresy for which he is then excommunicated.

Russell is typical of most one-shot theological heretics. He took his stand against the entire church, wrote one book, and let it go at that. But, in theology as in everything else, *you cannot change just one thing*. You cannot revise just one doctrine. Trinitarian theology after almost two millennia is a finely honed, carefully balanced enterprise. Orthodox theologians know that when anyone revises a single doctrine, even at the edges, a whole host of fall-out effects will result. An innovating theologian has an obligation to explore these unintended and unforeseen implications and deal with them before he releases his new discovery to the church.

Russell rejected the doctrine of final corporate judgment. He wrote a narrowly focused monograph that promoted the obviously heretical position of "no final corporate judgment and no end of history," and then he abandoned his naive disciples to take the consequences for defending his thesis. His thesis immediately raised the issue of dualism vs. Pelagianism, but he provided no indication in his book that he recognized either implication. He did not try to deal with these issues exegetically or philosophically.

He initially published his book anonymously. This indicates that he recognized at least some of the personal risks in proposing such a creed-defying thesis. Most of his followers have not been equally alert to these risks. They have committed themselves emotionally and intellectually to a ticking time bomb. Russell's book makes subversives out of his disciples. As awareness spreads among church officers regarding the dangerously heretical nature of his theology, only a few of his followers will avoid the accusation of being subversives by becoming frontal-assault kamikazes who are willing to go public in defense of his position. As laymen without any institutional base, such members can be dealt with easily enough. The subversives in the churches are the main threat. They are termites of orthodoxy.

I. The Structural Necessity of Subversion

Because heretical preterists oppose the historic creeds and confessions of the church, they have an institutional problem. Their spokesmen have only rarely been ordained as church officers. There is no good reason for a heretical preterist to seek ordination in any denomination that is governed by the historic creeds or by a Reformation-era confession. As soon as he announced from the pulpit or in print his views on the final judgment, he would be subject to formal de-frocking. Few men will spend the time and money necessary for ordination in a hierarchical, creed-bound church in order to be publicly de-frocked soon after he articulates his most precious distinguishing truths. What would be the point?

This makes the heretical preterist movement of necessity a permanent movement of laymen. These laymen recognize early that they will spend their lives in the wilderness, ecclesiastically speaking. They have come to grips with this emotionally; they remain in orthodox churches. *They see themselves as* ***ecclesiastical spoilers*** *of other men's institutional legacies, not as long-term builders of their own*. The means of their spoilation is clandestine evangelism among the faithful. They seek to

recruit other laymen to a "new, improved" theology that breaks with almost two millennia of creedal tradition on the doctrine of the final judgment. Their theological position is not taught in any seminary. It is not found in any systematic theology. It is not the product of decades or centuries of formal debate and refinement. It is encapsulated in no formal confession of faith. This theology remains undeveloped. Nevertheless, its proponents continue to evangelize.

Heretical preterists want all of the benefits of church membership: Christian fellowship, the sacraments, and help in times of need. But they are unwilling to start their own congregations, ordain their own ministers, pay for their own buildings, start their own seminaries or, above all, come to any formal, judicially enforceable agreement with one another regarding the details of what it is that they believe about a universe without a final historical judgment.

They seek to create a fellowship of private confessional believers within a larger fellowship of public confessional believers. The larger fellowship is covenantal. It is based on a public creed or confession of faith that formally rejects the eschatological position of heretical preterism. Heretical preterists today cannot win by a frontal assault on these creeds and confessions. They do not have the votes. So, they seek to create their own insiders' group within a local congregation. They seek to create a divisive mentality of "them vs. us" in their targeted victims, where "them" represents the covenantal hierarchy of the church, and "us" refers to members of a clandestine sub-group who have formally placed themselves under the judicial authority of elders whose task it is to police the congregation by means of a doctrinal statement. Then they clandestinely deny the truth of the binding doctrinal statement. A few of their spokesmen are public; most of them are not. If these laymen do not call attention to themselves by making public pronouncements, they can continue to recruit.

They can operate in this way far more successfully in a denomination that does not require laymen formally to affirm their commitment to the denomination's confession of faith as a condition of gaining voting membership. This is one reason why heretical preterism is spreading inside Presbyterian churches. Presbyterianism's by-laws do not require either voting or communing members to affirm allegiance to the Westminster standards or any previous church creed. This fact makes far easier the recruiting activities of heretical preterists. They can quietly go about their evangelism, and, whenever discovered by church authorities, they can evade or at least postpone the threat of

church sanctions. How? Because they have never affirmed the Westminster standards. The church's authorities must actively seek to force them to admit that they are in rebellion. This is not easy. It usually takes a formal hearing. It may take a trial. Only rarely will heretical preterists make an admission of guilt voluntarily. Why should they? Not for conscience's sake. *They are not emotionally burdened by guilt for subverting confessional standards that they have never formally affirmed.* By keeping quiet in public and recruiting in the shadows, they can undermine the orthodoxy of other laymen before church authorities recognize what is going on.

Presbyterian laymen can promote heresy without violating Presbyterian law until such time as they are ordered by a local church court to cease and desist. They have not previously been asked by the elders to affirm their commitment to the Westminster standards. As long as they do not seek ordination, which requires formal affirmation of the Westminster standards, they feel free to evangelize for their position on a guilt-free basis because, technically, they are not violating any formal rules. They adhere to the letter of Presbyterian law while defying its spirit.

J. "But I Don't Believe That!"

Heretical preterism is strictly a laymen's movement. Heretical preterists hold no church councils, hammer out no statements of faith, sign no affirmations, and submit themselves to no ecclesiastical authority that can enforce the provisions of their defining theology. They refuse to subordinate themselves formally to anyone in their movement who could then hold them accountable for what they say or do. Instead, they officially subordinate themselves to historic churches, but they mentally cross their fingers regarding the clear statements of the historic creeds and confessions regarding the final judgment as being in the future. When it comes to these historic creeds, they mentally say to themselves, "But I don't believe that."

This phrase—"But I don't believe that!"—is a way of psychological preservation for them. It is their way of being *in* the historic church, but not being confessionally *of* it. This phrase is also a major component of their strategy of subversion. When confronted by church authorities regarding the obvious implications of their faith, they respond, "But I don't believe that." They can get away with this because their intellectual spokesmen usually refuse to put into print the obviously heretical implications of their faith: either dualism or

perfectionism-Pelagianism. A critic cannot go to a public document that they have passed around privately that openly declares the dualism or perfectionist implications of their position. When they are confronted by church officials with these inescapable theological implications, they seek to evade responsibility for them by saying, "But I don't believe that." This gains them additional time to undermine the orthodox faith of laymen around them whom they continue clandestinely to seek to recruit.

They do not choose to make a public announcement of their faith in its dualist implications or its alternative perfectionist-Pelagian implications. Some of them may not even be aware of these implications. This is not an era in which laymen are encouraged or trained to think theologically. Those few who do have an interest in theology can be sidetracked by other laymen who hand them a thick, seemingly thought-out book like *The Parousia*. This is why the subversives gain converts.

Orthodox Christians, especially church officers, should recognize this heresy for what it is: either an affirmation of the eternal power of Satan through mankind's original sin or else a denial of the permanence of original sin in history. I think heretical preterism today is dualistic rather than perfectionist, because its adherents are believers in original sin. Given the doctrine of the permanence of original sin, heretical preterism represents one more attempt to import dualism into the church: *the doctrine of an eternally unresolved struggle between good and evil*.

Church officers who learn of any member's commitment to the doctrine of "full preterism" have an obligation to help this member clarify his or her thinking, and either become fully consistent with the full-preterist position or else fully abandon it. The member should be brought before the church's session or other disciplinary body and asked the following six questions in writing:

1. Is God's final judgment (Matt. 25:31–46; Rev. 20:12–15) behind us historically?
2. Is the physical resurrection of the dead (I Cor. 15; I Thes. 4:13–18; Rev. 20:12–13) behind us historically?
3. Will the church militant struggle against sin in history forever, paralleling the church triumphant's eternally sin-free existence in heaven?
4. Will sin and its curse, including physical death, continue throughout history, paralleling sin-free eternity in heaven?
5. Is original sin a temporary condition of mankind in history?
6. Are the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, and Athanasian Creed incorrect when they identify Christ's final judgment of the living and the dead as being in the future?

If he answers *yes* to question four, he has adopted dualism. If he answers *yes* to question five, he has adopted either perfectionism or Pelagianism. If he answers *yes* to both four and five, he is confused.

It is quite possible that the member has not thought through the implications of his position. He may not be willing to affirm any of these conclusions. In fact, his refusal to affirm any of this is quite likely. The elders must be prepared for the standard answer of heretical preterists who are "caught in the act": "But I don't believe that!" In order to pressure the member to begin to think carefully about whatever it is that he really does believe, it is imperative that the disciplinary body obtain a signed statement from the member that he does not affirm any of these six views, and also that he holds the opposite views. The signed and dated statement should look something like this:

> I believe the following:
>
> God's final judgment is still in the future. The judgment that He brought on Israel and the Old Covenant in A.D. 70 was not the final judgment described in Matthew 25:31–46; I Corinthians 15:24–56, and Revelation 20:12–15.
>
> God's final judgment will involve the simultaneous resurrection of all of the dead, at which time God will publicly identify covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers (Matt. 25:31–46). Members of each group will be consigned to their eternal places of abode: either the New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21; 22) or the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).
>
> Sin will no longer operate in history after this final judgment of Satan and all those joined by covenant to him.
>
> This will be the fulfillment of the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

If the congregation is Presbyterian, the member must also be asked to sign an affirmation of chapter XXXIII of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Answer 90 of the Larger Catechism. *This signed statement constitutes a formal rejection of the "full preterist" position*. The member must be told in advance that this signed statement can be shown to others at the discretion of the session. If the member refuses to sign such a statement under these conditions, the elders should continue the disciplinary process.

There are only three lawful ways out of a local congregation: by death, by letter of transfer, and by excommunication. Presbyterian laymen who have been brought before the church's session because they are suspected of holding heretical preterism, and who persist in their commitment to heretical preterism by refusing to sign a state-

ment that is consistent with the Westminster standards, must be removed from membership by excommunication.

K. Dealing Institutionally With Heretical Preterism

Those who hold heretical preterism are not inclined to keep their eschatological opinions to themselves—just the theological implications of their opinions. A pastor should assume that any church member who has been influenced by Russell's book or by Russell's contemporary disciples has discussed Russell's ideas with members of the congregation, though not its dualist or its perfectionist implications. As with Russell himself, who initially published his book anonymously, his disciples are sometimes clandestine in their promotion of these opinions. *A pastor should automatically assume that a strategy of subversion is in operation whenever he discovers even one Russellite in his congregation*. He must take steps to undermine it early.

Heretical preterism is a matter for church discipline, not academic debate in a joint forum. These two approaches for dealing with theological error must be distinguished. In 1880, the faculty of Princeton Seminary made a catastrophic error. They decided to enter into a joint publishing venture with liberal Union Seminary. This was the idea of Union's Charles A. Briggs, who was de-frocked for heresy in 1893, mainly because of his harsh rhetoric in an 1891 lecture.[18] Briggs understood in 1880 that if he could lure the Princeton faculty into a jointly sponsored debate over the higher criticism of the Bible, he could move this issue from a matter of church discipline to a topic of formal academic debate—just one opinion among many. The jointly published journal, *Presbyterian Review*, opened the floodgates to higher criticism within the Presbyterian Church, 1881–83.[19] These gates were never again closed.

No critic of Russell's version of preterism should participate in any joint venture with those who hold any variation of Russell's position unless he publicly identifies the position as heretical and a matter of church discipline. If a third party invites representatives of heretical preterism to present their case, orthodox Christians involved in the conference or forum should begin their presentations with a clear statement that heretical preterism is in fact heretical and should be a matter of church discipline. Academics tend to forget that public debates are representative forums. These forums grant equal status to

18. North, *Crossed Fingers*, chaps. 4, 5.
19. *Ibid.*, ch. 3.

all participants. A Russellite should never be acknowledged as possessing equal status by someone who affirms the historic creeds of the church. He should be treated as if he were a Jehovah's Witness. The Apostles' Creed is more clearly anti-Russellite than it is anti-Arian. Jehovah's Witnesses are Arians. Both forms of Russellism are equally heretical: J. Stuart's and Charles Taze's. They should be dealt with inside the church in the same way.

Conclusion

God's final judgment of the world is coming. It did not take place in A.D. 70, which was God's final judgment on Old Covenant Israel. The bodily resurrection of all mankind is in the future. The dumping of the contents of hell into the lake of fire also lies ahead. If a person is to be an orthodox Christian, he should take his stand publicly with Paul, John, and the historic creeds and confessions of the church. They all agree with respect to the final judgment: it lies ahead. For as long as original sin remains the condition of humanity, God's final judgment of the world remains in the future.

Heretical preterism offers no eschatology, if we define eschatology as "the doctrine of last things." For heretical preterism, there are no last things for the church militant. There is only eternity: the permanently sin-cursed world of the church militant and the incorrupt world of the church triumphant. In place of eschatology, heretical preterism offers either dualism or perfectionism-Pelagianism. In our day, it offers mainly dualism: the equal ultimacy of good and evil forever, world without end, amen. It offers a vision of a church that forever will receive a grim answer to its prayer, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." That answer is simple: "Not a chance." It is Satan who gives this answer, not God.

J. Stuart Russell introduced his book with this statement: "The work is almost wholly exegetical; and there is no attempt to invent or establish a theory, but only, by honest and faithful interpretation of the New Testament Scriptures, to allow them to speak for themselves."[20] I conclude with this warning: whenever anyone tells you that he is merely letting the facts speak for themselves, and that he has no hidden agenda or underlying theory, I strongly advise you to keep your hand upon your wallet and your back against the wall.

For orthodoxy to persist, heretics must be excommunicated. In

20. Russell, *Parousia*, p. 1.

the case of heretical preterism, it is highly unlikely that it will become a major ecclesiastical threat in my lifetime. There are too few of them, they are underfunded, they cannot get through ordination without hiding their beliefs, and they have yet to produce a single systematic theology that incorporates their dualism. The old rule is true: "You can't change just one thing." Their dualism threatens all aspects of orthodoxy and ethics, not just eschatology. Theology is a package deal. Their package is openly, forthrightly, defiantly, middle-finger-extended heretical.

They are devoted to the cause of dualism. They want to take over our churches in order to rewrite the historic creeds to conform to dualism. That which they cannot subvert and capture, they will destroy. Whatever they cannot run in terms of their agenda, they will undermine. They have not been willing to pay the freight to build their own publishing houses, congregations, and ordination process. They seek the positive sanctions of church membership without the threat of negative sanctions. They want access to the sacraments despite their denial of the confession that gains them legal access to the sacraments. They want Christian fellowship on their terms, namely, their right to quietly teach an alien faith and subvert orthodoxy. They want the right to re-write the historic creeds and then toss you out. Fortunately, they are not competent enough to succeed, but they would give you the right boot of fellowship if you let them re-write the creeds. Take action now. Remove them.

They will do their best to persuade orthodox people to engage them as equals in open debate. This is a familiar tactic of heretics. They want to stay in the church and subvert it for as long as they can before sanctions are applied. You have already read enough to know that these laymen are obviously far too heretical for pastors to spend time arguing with them. Put them on trial. Let them conduct their debates in the shadows of the church on their own time, with their own money. If you have a lot of spare time to waste, you can argue with them to your heart's content after your church has excommunicated them, but not before. If they repent, you may decide to readmit them as communicant members after a year or two of close interrogation and careful monitoring of their activities. But you must take the initiative. Argue with them in private (never in public) only after they are outside the church, looking in. This is a war in defense of the orthodoxy of God's church, not a friendly debating society among equals. *These people are no more "ignorant brethren" than Jehovah's*

Witnesses are. They are self-conscious in their defiance. They will undermine your ministry if you hesitate.

Here is a good statement of their position. You do not need more evidence to conduct a successful trial than the following.

Postscript: David A. Green's Reply

This is Mr. Green's Appendix I of his essay, "Gary North: Postmillennial or Neo-Manichean?"[21]

APPENDIX I

North says that preterist church members "should be brought before the church's session or other disciplinary body and asked the following six questions in writing." (*Ibid., "But I Don't Believe That!"*) Submitted below are answers to North's six questions:

1. **Is God's final judgment (Matt. 25:31–46; Rev. 20:12–15) behind us historically?**

Yes.

God's corporate judgment of all men is behind us historically, and God continues to judge all men of every generation, in history (Zech. 14:16–19) and at each man's death (Heb. 9:27).

2. **Is the physical resurrection of the dead (I Cor. 15; I Thess. 4:13–18; Rev. 20:12–13) behind us historically?**

No. The *spiritual* Resurrection of the dead is behind us historically.

3. **Will the church militant struggle against sin in history forever, paralleling the church triumphant's eternally sin-free existence in heaven?**

This question has ambiguities, making it impossible for a preterist to answer it with an unqualified yes or no.

Does the church's "struggle against sin" imply the church's *non-triumph over sin on Earth*? If so, then No, the church militant will not "struggle against sin in history forever."

What does "paralleling" mean? Does it mean that the power of sin and Satan on Earth is *equal* to the power of God and His Righteousness in Heaven? If so, then No, the church militant's struggle against sin in history will *not* forever "parallel" the church triumphant's eternally sin-free existence in Heaven.

Let us put it this way:

The church militant will increasingly triumph over sin and sinners in history forever, *paralleling* the church triumphant's eternally sin-free existence in Heaven. God's will is being done "on Earth as it is in Heaven."

21. treeoflifeministries.info/david-a-green-4/ (accessed January 16, 2021).

4. **Will sin and its curse, including physical death, continue throughout history, paralleling sin-free eternity in heaven?**

Sin will continue throughout history, but believers have been forgiven of their sins. Death is no longer a curse for believers who fall asleep. Death no longer has any sting for them. There is nothing for them to fear (Heb. 2:15). Because they trust in Jesus and keep His word, *they will never die* (Jn. 8:51; 11:26).

Again, what does "paralleling" mean? Does it mean that sin and its curse on Earth are *equal* to the Righteousness of God in Heaven? If so, then No, sin on Earth is *absolutely not equal to* (parallel to) the Righteousness of God in Heaven. There is no "parallel" between sin and God's Righteousness. God wins. Sin loses, *even if sin continues to exist*.

North understands this, since he is a postmillennialist. The mere existence of sin and suffering does not imply the non-triumph of righteousness. If it did, we would be forced to say that the Cross of Christ has as of yet won zero victories, beyond Christ Himself.

5. **Is original sin a temporary condition of mankind in history?**

No. Otherwise, how could Christ Jesus be a "*Priest forever*?" (Heb. 7:21–25)

6. **Are the Nicene Creed and Apostles' Creed incorrect when they identify Christ's final judgment of the living and the dead as being in the future?**

Absolutely.

APPENDIX B

LEGALISM VS. ALCOHOL

> *And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 14:26

The key biblical passage that is rarely discussed in detail by anti-alcohol, total abstinence advocates is Deuteronomy 14:26, which refers to the festival of celebration, part of the mandatory tithe system. "And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household."[1] Total abstainers will occasionally refer to the passage's authorization of wine, and then say that the Hebrew word really means grape juice. But their exegetical problem is the Hebrew word *shekar*, here translated as "strong drink." It is based on the Hebrew word *shakar*, which means "to be, or become, drunk, drunken."[2] *Shekar* is accompanied by the Hebrew word for wine in all but one instance (Numbers 28:7) of the 22 times that it appears in the Old Testament.[3] This is because wine also intoxicates, just as stronger alcoholic beverages do.

This places the strict prohibitionist in an intellectually embarrass-

1. Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed.(Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1999] 2012), ch. 35.

2. According to the standard lexicon by Brown, Driver, and Briggs. See Gentry, *God Gave Wine: What the Bible Says About Alcohol* (Lincoln, California: Oakdown, 2001), p. 60. This is an update of his book, *The Christian and Alcoholic Beverages: A Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1986).

3. Gentry, *idem*.

ing exegetical position. He is either forced to deny literally all of the Hebrew lexicons[4] and also the contexts of the passages that include *shekar*,[5] or else he is forced to conclude that God in the Old Covenant authorized the consumption of alcohol as part of a mandated family festival of celebration. How can a Christian logically make a universal condemnation of something that was specifically authorized by God for His covenant people, as part of their mandatory national worship? If he argues that alcohol used to be morally acceptable to God, but is now prohibited by God, he must find explicit references in the New Testament to prove his case. Problem: there is no such universal New Testament prohibition.[6]

The Mosaic priests were not allowed to drink either wine or strong drink inside the tabernacle. "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations" (Lev. 10:9).[7] The reason for this prohibition was that alcohol belonged exclusively to God inside the tabernacle or the temple. Alcohol was a special offering to God. It was poured out to Him, not just wine, but strong wine—clearly not grape juice! "And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the LORD for a drink offering" (Num. 28:7). Why would God demand a sacrificial offering of something inherently corrupt, foul, or immoral? This makes no sense. This is why strict prohibitionism makes no sense.

Wine in the Old Testament was not grape juice. Grape juice does not have the following effect: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). Obviously, grape juice does not have any inflaming effect. Both wine and strong drink were legitimate for most people most of the time. They were both part of God's holy system of mandatory national festivals. Furthermore, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts" (Prov. 31:6). It is addiction to alcohol that is prohibited: "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!" (Isa. 5:11). Wine is dangerous for ad-

4. *Ibid*., p. 34.
5. *Ibid*., pp. 38–39.
6. *Ibid*., ch. 4.
7. *Gary North, Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), ch. 8.

dicts. Grape juice is not. "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment" (Isa. 28:7). Wine inebriates. So does strong drink. "Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered" (Isa. 29:9–10). It is clear why the proponents of total abstinence from alcohol never discuss wine in the context of strong drink: both are intoxicants, yet God authorized both for one of His mandatory festivals. Did God authorize something that is immoral? Of course not. So, total abstainers avoid discussing Deuteronomy 14:26.

In the world before pasteurization, all commercially available wine was fermented, i.e., alcoholic. Only after a Methodist dentist, Dr. Thomas Welch, figured out in 1869 that he could kill wine by pasteurizing it, so that he and his Methodist peers would no longer have to drink wine at the Lord's Supper, did grape juice appear, or, as his commercial product was originally called, Dr. Welch's Non-Fermented Wine. This company eventually evolved into the Welch company, which specializes in fruit juices.

Weak Christians should not drink alcohol if they think it violates some moral prohibition, but the source of their error is theological vinegar. Weak Christians are being herded like sheep by pastors who do not understand or respect the doctrine of Christian liberty. The task of the mature Christian is to refrain from publicly assailing the weak Christian's sensibilities. He has another responsibility, however: to wean the weak Christian away from a theology that does not honor the principle of Christian liberty.[8]

It should not surprise us that the most scholarly published defense of wine as exclusively grape juice, and the Bible as teaching total abstinence from alcohol, was written by a Seventh Day Adventist. It should also not surprise us that his book has been praised by Protestant fundamentalists, who have yet to publish anything equally scholarly on the subject.[9] We should not regard these fundamentalist

8. Gentry, *God Gave Wine*. See also G. I. Williamson, *Wine in the Bible and the Church* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Pilgrim, 1976).

9. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Wine in the Bible: A Biblical Study on the Use of Alcoholic Beverages* (Chicago: Signal Press, 1989).

authors as weak Christians. We should regard them as stubbornly, heretically, arrogantly wrong.[10] When David Wilkerson wrote that "Christians who drink alcoholic beverages of any kind are deceiving themselves,"[11] he is deceiving his fundamentalist readers. When Jack Van Impe writes that "*Alcohol is never approved of by God in any amount for the obedient Christian*,"[12] he is being disobedient to God. When he writes that "Everyone who drinks has an alcohol problem,"[13] he reveals that he has an exegesis problem.

Conclusion

Strict prohibitionism is a manifestation of legalism. Legalism is a system of man-made rules that are not found in the Bible, which are then substituted for covenantal obedience to God's Bible-revealed laws. Legalism also substitutes the traditions of men for the clear revelation of God in His Bible. The heart of Pharisaism was its legalism. Jesus did not tolerate it. Neither did Paul.

10. Is "heretical" too strong a word? Fundamentalists regard Dr. Bacchiocchi's and the SDA's position on soul-sleep rather than hell as heretical. They regard the SDA's and his view of the Saturday sabbath as heretical. It is their task to show exegetically why they are not heretical when they stand with Seventh Day Adventism on the alcohol issue.

11. David Wilkerson, *Sipping Saints* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Revell, 1978), p. 35; cited in Gentry, *God Gave Wine*, p. 4.

12. Jack Van Impe, *Alcohol: The Beloved Enemy* (Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson, 1980), p. 8; cited in Gentry, *idem*.

13. Van Impe, *Alcohol*, p. 149; cited in Gentry, *ibid*., p. 2.